



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



TUESDAY — 16 Nov 2021

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	11/16 Cities tackle Covid, pollution too
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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/16/special-series/ppe-coronavirus-waste.html
GIST	<p>The River Thames, the tidal artery that squiggles through central London, holds up a mirror to life on dry land: scraggly remains of fir trees float by after Christmas; in the first days of a fresh year, bobbing champagne bottles hint at recent revelry.</p> <p>Lara Maiklem, author of “Mudlark: In Search of London’s Past Along the River Thames,” scours the shoreline for artifacts such as coins, tokens, buckles and potsherds, some dating to the period of Roman rule. Loosed from pockets or heaped as infill, these are the flotsam of centuries lived on London’s streets.</p> <p>“I find stuff because humans are litterbugs,” Ms. Maiklem said. “We’ve always been chucking things into the river.”</p> <p>But lately Ms. Maiklem is encountering a type of garbage she hadn’t seen there before: the remnants of Covid 19-era personal protective equipment (or P.P.E.), particularly masks and plastic gloves bloated with sand and resting in the rubbly silt.</p> <p>Ms. Maiklem once counted around 20 gloves while canvassing 100 yards of shoreline. She wasn’t surprised; if anything, she had feared the shore would be even more inundated with pieces that had flown from pockets or trash cans or swirled into the Victorian sewers. Happily, Ms. Maiklem said, the carpet of Covid-inspired trash at the edge of the Thames wasn’t nearly as plush as it is elsewhere.</p> <p>P.P.E. litter is fouling landscapes across the globe. Dirtied masks and gloves tumbleweed across city parks, streets and shores in Lima, Toronto, Hong Kong and beyond. Researchers in Nanjing, China, and La Jolla, Calif., recently calculated that 193 countries have generated more than 8 million tons of pandemic-related plastic waste, and the advocacy group OceansAsia estimated that as many as 1.5 billion face masks could wind up in the marine environment in a single year.</p> <p>Since January, volunteers with the Ocean Conservancy’s International Coastal Cleanup have plucked 109,507 pieces of P.P.E. from the world’s watery margins.</p> <p>Now, across the litter-strewn planet, scientists, officials, companies and environmentalists are attempting to tally and repurpose P.P.E. — and limit the trash in the first place.</p> <p>Trash surveys and cleanups</p> <p>Todd Clardy, a marine scientist in Los Angeles, sometimes counts the P.P.E. he sees on the 10-minute walk from his apartment in Koreatown to the Metro station. One day this month, he said, he spotted “24 discarded masks, two rubber gloves and loads of hand sanitation towelettes.” Sometimes he sees them atop grates that read, “No Dumping, Drains to Ocean.”</p> <p>Dr. Clardy suspects some masks simply slip from wrists. “Once it falls on the ground, people probably look at it like, ‘Huh, I’m not wearing that again.’” Breezes likely free some from trash cans, too. “The bins are always full,” Dr. Clardy added. “So even if you wanted to put it on top, it would fly away.”</p> <p>Dr. Clardy’s accounting isn’t part of a formal project, but there are several such undertakings underway. In the Netherlands, Liselotte Rambonnet, a biologist at Leiden University, and Auke-Florian Hiemstra, a biologist at Naturalis Biodiversity Center, keep a running count of masks and gloves littering streets and canals. They track animals’ interactions with the castoff gear.</p> <p>Among their documented examples are an unfortunate perch trapped in the thumb of a phlegmy-looking latex glove, and birds weaving P.P.E. into nesting materials, risking entanglement. “Nowadays it would be difficult to find a coot nest in the canals of Amsterdam without a face mask,” Ms. Rambonnet and Mr. Hiemstra wrote in an email.</p> <p>The researchers maintain a global website, Covidlitter.com, where anyone can report animal and P.P.E. incidents. Dispatches include sightings of a brown fur seal tangled in a face mask in Namibia; a mask-snarled puffin found dead on an Irish beach; and a sea turtle in Australia with a mask in its stomach. Back</p>

home, the researchers, who also lead canal cleanups in Leiden, worry P.P.E. trash will increase now that the Dutch government [has reinstated mask requirements](#).

“Every weekend we encounter face masks — new ones and old, discolored ones,” Ms. Rambonnet and Mr. Hiemstra wrote. “Some are barely recognizable, and blend in with autumn leaves.”

Cleanup efforts are also underway in London, where staff members and volunteers with the environmental group [Thames21](#) count and collect trash from the river’s banks. In September, the group closely surveyed more than a kilometer of shore and found P.P.E. at 70 percent of their study sites — and notably clustered along a portion of the Isle of Dogs, where 30 pieces pocked a 100-meter stretch.

“I don’t remember seeing any face masks until the pandemic; they weren’t on our radar,” said Debbie Leach, the group’s chief executive officer, who has been involved since 2005. Ms. Leach’s team sends the P.P.E. to incinerators or landfills, but small bits are surely left behind because the trash “releases plastics into the water that can’t be retrieved,” she said.

Researchers in Canada [recently estimated](#) that a single surgical-style mask on a sandy shoreline could unleash more than 16 million microplastics, far too small to collect and haul away.

Anti-litter campaigns

Roaming sandy swaths along Chile’s coast, Martin Thiel, a marine biologist at the Universidad Católica del Norte in Coquimbo, saw plenty of signs asking visitors to mask up — but few instructions about ditching used coverings. To his frustration, masks were scattered, swollen with sand and water and tangled in algae. “They act a little like Velcro,” he said. “They very quickly accumulate stuff.”

But a few beaches, including one in Coquimbo, had trash cans designated specifically for P.P.E. Unlike oil-drum-style alternatives nearby, some had triangular tops with tiny, circular openings that would deter rummaging and prevent wind from tousling the garbage.

In [a paper](#) published in [Science of the Total Environment](#) this year, Dr. Thiel and 11 collaborators recommended that communities install more purpose-built receptacles like these, as well as signs reminding people to consider the landscape and their neighbors, human and otherwise.

“We think there is more to the story than, ‘just protect yourself,’” said Dr. Thiel, the paper’s lead author. Houston has already started. In September 2020, the city launched an anti-litter campaign partly aimed at P.P.E. Featuring images such as a filthy mask on grass, the posters read [“Don’t Let Houston Go to Waste”](#) and encouraged residents to “Do the PPE123,” choreography that entailed social distancing, wearing masks and throwing them away.

Early in the pandemic, “we weren’t sure if [P.P.E.] was a safety concern and would spread Covid around the city,” said Martha Castex-Tatum, the city’s vice mayor pro tem, who spearheaded the initiative. As a clearer picture of [transmission](#) emerged, the effort “became a beautification project,” she said. The images were plastered on billboards, sports stadium jumbotrons and trash-collection trucks. Council members handed out 3,200 trash grabber tools and urged residents to use them.

Recycling efforts

As the pandemic bloomed across South Africa, shoppers grabbed fistfuls of wet wipes as they entered stores, draping the cloths over shopping cart handles while roaming aisles, said Annette Devenish, marketing manager at Sani-touch, a brand that supplies many national Shoprite Group supermarkets with wipes for customer use. Sani-touch found that usage soared 500 percent early on and has fallen, but still hovers above pre-pandemic figures.

Environmentalists often rail on wet wipes, many of which snarl sewer systems when they are flushed down drains and degrade into microplastics that drift through food webs. (Thames21, for instance, is backing newly [proposed legislation that would ban all wipes containing plastic](#).)

	<p>Ms. Devenish said that manufacturers ought to focus on making them recyclable or compostable, and this fall Sani-touch launched a project to give used wipes a second life. Customers can drop off cloths before leaving the store; recycling companies will turn the polypropylene cloths into plastic pallets for use in Sani-touch's manufacturing facilities.</p> <p>Fashioned from many materials, including metal and elastic, single-use masks can be harder to recycle, Ms. Devenish said, but she hopes they can be stuffed into plastic bottles to become "ecobricks," low-cost building blocks of benches, tables, trash bins and more.</p> <p>P.P.E. recycling schemes are also advancing elsewhere. In the Indian city of Pune, the CSIR-National Chemical Laboratory is teaming up with a bio-medical waste facility and private companies to pilot ways to transform head-to-toe protective wear into plastic pellets used to manufacture other goods. (None are yet being made and sold, "but hopefully soon," wrote Harshawardhan V. Pol, a principal scientist, in an email.)</p> <p>In fall 2020, the Canadian government asked companies to pitch ideas for recycling P.P.E. or making it compostable. The government may funnel up to \$1 million each toward a few prototypes.</p> <p>Preventing P.P.E. from polluting urban environments will be a boon to the spaces where residents have sought solace. "In stressful times, people seek out these places, but they've been pretty bad about taking rubbish and trash away with them," said Ms. Leach of Thames21. "Masks blow hither and thither," she added, "and finally come to rest when they hit a patch of water," grass or sidewalk, where they too often remain.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Whatcom Co. worst flooding 31yrs
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/weather/weather-blog/sumas-flooding-atmospheric-river/281-e5823c49-4269-4145-ad4f-d219b40ba945
GIST	<p>SUMAS, Wash. — Emergency officials in Whatcom County called it the worst flooding since 1990, and more is still to come. Officials estimate more than 500 people have been displaced from their homes, especially in north Whatcom County.</p> <p>More than half of the displaced residents moved to shelters that were quickly established Monday at Everson Elementary School, Nooksack Elementary School and North County Christ the King Church in Lynden.</p> <p>Several schools are closed Tuesday, including in Bellingham, Lynden and Mount Vernon.</p> <p>The small town of Sumas near the Canadian Border was inundated with floodwaters Monday. The Nooksack River spilled over its banks Monday morning and washed out several roads.</p> <p>Residents were advised to remain in their homes. City and county rescue crews were inundated with calls for help, so neighbors used fishing boats to bring people to safety.</p> <p>As of Monday evening, there were no reports of serious injuries in Whatcom County.</p> <p>An atmospheric river brought heavy rain and wind to western Washington on Sunday night, prompting Flood Warnings on a dozen rivers. Bellingham received about 3.5 inches of rain over a 24-hour period from Sunday to Monday, according to the National Weather Service (NWS).</p> <p>The Nooksack River at Everson appeared to be cresting Monday at noon, according to the NWS.</p> <p>There is not a safe way to drive from Sumas to Bellingham due to floodwaters, according to the Sumas Police Department.</p>

"They're in a bad way out there," said neighbor Jordan Beld. "There's a lot of water and it's only getting higher."

Beld said he has family stranded in the flood zone and was desperate to get them to safety as the waters continued to rise.

"A couple hours ago, they all thought they were okay. No water had shown up, but now it's coming full force," Beld said. "I've heard it's up to 4 or 5 feet deep in the neighborhoods. People got a foot in their house."

Sarah Ivanhoe and her 15-year-old son left their home when water started flooding inside.

They live about 2 miles away from where rescue volunteers gathered at Halverstick Road with their boats.

The pair had to wade through freezing cold water until someone floated by to pick them up.

"There was nothing in our house and then in less than 30 minutes, it was up to our ankles. Outside it was up to my waist in some spots," said Sarah's son, Thomas Austin. "I was terrified."

"It's bad. It's pretty deep. It's fast. It's dirty and it's cold," added soaked and shivering Sarah.

In downtown Sumas, water started going over the Cherry Street Bridge on Monday morning. All the roads leading out of town, including to the U.S.-Canadian border, are closed, according to the city.

City Hall was one of the buildings that flooded.

Rescues continued across Whatcom County Monday. Emergency officials reported about 70 by late morning alone.

Both directions of I-5 are closed south of Bellingham due to flooding and landslides.

People were seen launching boats to rescue others who were trapped by the floodwaters in Sumas.

Multiple vehicles washed off the road, and the city said people are waiting to be rescued. The city urged people not to drive around "road closed" signs.

It takes just 12 inches of water to sweep away a vehicle, and the road may have collapsed under the water, according to the NWS.

"These bad decisions put out first responders at risk and take them away from other life saving duties (*sic*)," the city said in [a Facebook post](#).

Residents are asked to conserve water until the floodwaters recede as access to the water springs has been hindered. The city is also expected to lose power.

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HEADLINE	11/15 WA hospitals: 3,000 lost to mandate
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/washington-hospitals-lose-roughly-3000-workers-over-covid-19-vaccine-mandate/281-b0ff14de-27b6-4b0a-bcca-ed924c314ca0
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — About 94% of Washington’s hospital staff is fully vaccinated against COVID-19 following the state's vaccine mandate, according to the Washington State Hospital Association (WSHA).</p> <p>About 2% were non-compliant with the mandate, meaning the health care system lost about 3,000 workers.</p>

The other 4% of hospital workers have either been approved for exemptions or are on leave until they are considered fully vaccinated.

Despite the relatively high vaccination rate among staff, WSHA CEO Cassie Sauer said many rural hospitals had much lower vaccination rates among their workers.

This, along with continued burnout for workers, has put additional strain on these facilities. Sauer said WSHA is happy to be in talks with state government and Gov. Jay Inslee's office on ways to invest more in the health care workforce.

Sauer also said that additional funding could open more spots in the state's health care programs to train more workers at a time.

"We continue in our state to turn away hundreds of and maybe thousands of qualified applicants to health care programs for lack of space," she explained.

As of Monday morning, 865 COVID-19 patients are in Washington hospitals. The number, while still remarkable, is a 12% decline from 968 last week and an even more significant decline from 1,087 last month.

The number of COVID-19 patients on ventilators also went down about 20% to 120 across the state.

COVID-19 cases have mostly been on the decline since the beginning of October after spiking to record highs in August and September.

However, death rates have not continued to drop as significantly, with about 15 Washingtonians dying from the virus every day. That's about 105 people a week or 450 people a month.

As of Nov. 10, roughly [61% of all Washingtonians](#) are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Criticisms: Tacoma search for PD chief
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/tacoma/criticisms-arise-over-tacomas-selection-process-for-police-chief/281-f228e853-0fd4-4268-a09c-450bfa545fef
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. — Tacoma has narrowed down its pool for police chief to four candidates.</p> <p>The search has been almost a year in the making, with Michael Ake serving as interim police chief while Tacoma finds the right person for the role.</p> <p>Shelby Fritz, director of Tacoma's Human Resources, said the city wanted to make sure that the most qualified candidates were looked at, so they could help lead Tacoma in a new way.</p> <p>"In terms of transformation, you don't always want to stick with a narrow pool of candidates," Fritz explained. "Let's get the broadest, most experienced group we can, whether they live in Florida, Kentucky, California, or wherever."</p> <p>Each candidate has a decades-long career. They bring over 100 years of combined experience to the table. But Tanisha Antoine, president of LegallyBlack, said experience isn't the issue, it's how the city got to this point in the first place.</p> <p>"They did not utilize any of the Black or Brown community to be a part of the selection process," Antoine said.</p>

	<p>Antoine said representatives from various communities within Tacoma weren't asked to participate by the city in selecting the four finalists. She warned that without a connection to the communities that would be served, an incoming police chief won't have the knowledge needed to deal with Tacoma's problems.</p> <p>"There's a blind spot you already have," she said. "We've already seen that when we have the internal Tacoma Police Chief being brought in, they're not doing anything different. So fresh blood is necessary. However, if you're not including your community, you are failing your community."</p> <p>The candidates are:</p> <p>Michael Carroll: Retired from the Alameda County Sheriff's Office in San Leandro, California in April, where he was responsible for the Emergency Services Communication Center and served in a variety of leadership roles.</p> <p>Sean Case: Currently serves within the Anchorage Police Department as the captain responsible for internal affairs, patrol, the administrative and inspection divisions. He is also employed as a police practices consultant for the Daigle Law Group.</p> <p>Kathy McAlpine: Currently serving as police chief for the Tigard Police Department. She began her career at the Tacoma Police Department as a patrol officer. During her time in Tacoma, she served in several leadership positions, including assistant chief of police for the Administrative and Investigation bureaus.</p> <p>Avery Moore: Currently serves the Dallas Police Department as the assistant chief of police for the Investigations Bureau. His career began in Dallas where he started as an officer and has held several leadership roles.</p> <p>The city expects to appoint a new police chief by December.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Health officials urge: kids' flu shots
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/local-health-officials-urge-families-to-get-kids-flu-shots-after-sharp-decline
GIST	<p>Local health officials are urging families to have their kids vaccinated against the flu after a sharp decline in childhood flu vaccine rates this year.</p> <p>The Washington Department of Health said pediatric flu vaccinations are down about 25 percent from this time last year. Health officials said last year's flu activity was very low, meaning fewer people have natural immunity due to the lack of exposure.</p> <p>"Flu can be serious for kids and a flu vaccine is the best way to protect them," said Dr. Tao Sheng Kwan-Gett, Chief Science Officer. "With the holidays quickly approaching, it is crucial parents take precautionary steps now to keep everyone in the family healthy and safe. A flu vaccine is especially important this year due to the potential dangers of both flu and COVID-19 circulating at the same time."</p> <p>Health officials said flu activity is unpredictable, because the timing, severity, and length can change from one year to the next. Typically, flu activity peaks between December and February but there can be significant activity as late as May, according to health officials.</p> <p>"We are concerned that our youngest children remain vulnerable to both flu and COVID-19 illness," said Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH, Secretary of Health. "Although the COVID-19 vaccine is not yet available for kids 4 and under, the flu vaccine is. As parents, we want to do everything in our power to protect our children – and vaccination is an important tool that's available to every family in Washington."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Gov. proclaims severe weather emergency
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SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/politics/gov-inslee-issues-severe-weather-emergency-as-rain-gusty-winds-lash-washington
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. — With massive flooding reported in parts of Western Washington from relentless rainfall, Gov. Jay Inslee on Monday issued a severe weather emergency proclamation for several counties in an effort to help residents affected by the storm get back on their feet.</p> <p>The proclamation covers several counties, including Clallam, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, Lewis, King, Kitsap, Pierce, Mason, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Thurston, and Whatcom counties.</p> <p>Under the provisions of the declaration, Washington state agencies and departments are required to direct state resources and do "everything reasonably possible" to assist those who have been negatively impacted by the weather, according to a written statement released by the governor's office.</p> <p>The order also requires the Washington State Military Department and Emergency Management Division, with the support of the Washington National Guard, to coordinate all incident-related assistance to the affected areas.</p> <p>KOMO News meteorologist Shannon O'Donnell said some areas logged 6 to 7 inches of rain over the past days, which when combined with Monday's gusty winds, was linked to power outages, flooded homes and businesses and downed trees.</p> <p>The severe storm with floods, landslides, mudslides, and the potential for straight-line winds is causing road closures, the need to establish alternate transportation routes, evacuations, impacts to local utility services including significant power outages, localized reductions in available drinking water, and damage to homes and other public and private property and infrastructure</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Mount Vernon civil emergency
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/mount-vernon-recommends-evacuation-declares-civil-emergency-in-wake-of-heavy-flooding
GIST	<p>MOUNT VERNON, Wash. — As the Skagit River recedes in some spots, it continues to rise in others, forcing the mayor of Mount Vernon to declare a civil emergency Monday as crews worked to assemble a temporary flood wall downtown.</p> <p>The latest forecast for the Skagit River shows it cresting between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. Tuesday afternoon at a record-high 37.6 feet. Businesses along the river walk spent the day putting sandbags near door and windows.</p> <p>The City of Mount Vernon recommended evacuation Monday evening because a "flood is threatening areas west of the Division Street (SR 536) bridge." The bridge is likely to close at 9 p.m. Monday, according to the city.</p> <p>"I hope that wall is well-built and holds," said John Kochendorfer with District Brewing. "It looks good to me but seems like no one is really sure and no one is really sure how high the river will get of course."</p> <p>Plenty of people who live in and around Mount Vernon have been coming down to see firsthand the fast-rising river. KOMO News caught up with former mayor Bud Norris who helped play a role in getting the flood wall infrastructure built.</p> <p>"With the improvements we did when I was in office with the flood wall, I think that downtown Mount Vernon is safe," Norris said.</p> <p>He mentioned another layer of protection that some might miss when first looking at the waterway.</p> <p>"There are logs out there that are to deflect the debris out to the middle of the river," Norris said.</p>

Large trees and other debris could be seen floating downstream Monday afternoon, causing some concern among business owners.

The city set up three different sandbag stations for people to pick up materials, should they need them. One woman drove down from Sedro-Wooley to help her friend who lives in Mount Vernon protect her home.

"I've actually never seen it like this," said Michelle Lawler. "I've already gotten pictures of people's homes being ruined, a foot of water in their home. People who aren't going to prepare for this are stupid, honestly."

In terms of the flood wall that's been erected, the city's Project Development Manager has faith it will perform under pressure.

"This has not been tested, certainly not at this level," said Peter Donovan. "So, it's sort of a wait-and-see."

As of Sunday, the wall stood at 38 feet. Heading into Monday night, crews are adding even more to it by installing an extra 3 feet of height, topping out the wall at 41 feet.

"We're watching the river levels minute-by-minute," noted Donovan.

Once the river reaches 35 feet, the city is expected to close the West Mount Vernon Bridge to all traffic. As of now, an estimated 800 people are under a voluntary evacuation order on the city's west side.

The city has also activated its Emergency Operations Center to monitor the situation overnight.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Sumas submerged by floodwaters
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/rescue-operations-underway-as-sumas-is-submerged-by-floodwaters
GIST	<p>SUMAS, Wash. — Hundreds of people found themselves being trapped by rising floodwaters from the Nooksack River and volunteers joined first responders to lead the evacuation effort.</p> <p>With water coursing across nearly every road into Sumas, tractors and boats proved to be one of the few ways to safely run these rescue operations. However, once the sun went down on Monday night, even this became too dangerous.</p> <p>"It's pitch black," said David Vinke, who spent day saving lives. "Like I said, the wind's blowing. I have a 20 foot boat and the current was yarding it into the telephone poles and stuff like that."</p> <p>Vinke said he likely helped 25 or 30 people escape aboard his boat to reach higher ground. Those who had to evacuate Sumas described a harrowing ordeal.</p> <p>"We were scared. I mean, it's our first flood," said Stephanie Koehler, who along with her 13-year-old daughter Sophia planned to spend the night at a shelter after the two were shuttled across the flooded landscape.</p> <p>"A boat came up to our porch and we piled in there and then they dropped us off," Koehler said. "And then we got into another boat to Haverstick and then from there a tractor bucket ride to the bus."</p> <p>Some 500 people ended up being displaced in the northeast parts of Whatcom County, according to the emergency management department, and more than half headed to shelters like the one at North County Christ the King Church in Lynden.</p>

	<p>"People were caught by surprise. I mean, they knew there was going to be flooding but they didn't realize how devastating it would be," said Ramona Stumpf, who was helping coordinate shelter efforts at the church.</p> <p>People showed up to the church with donations to help and nearby schools loaned floor mats when the cots started running low. Neighbors said they did their best to prepare for the storm but it was far worse than most imagined.</p> <p>"We had sandbags on our garage door and our house door but the water just came right in," Koehler said. "And watching the flood, sandbags were actually being pushed from people's houses and down the river."</p> <p>There are still people in Sumas trying to get out and staff at the emergency management center said they are coordinating rescues throughout the night.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Historic flooding across North Sound
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/weather/historic-flooding-continues-across-the-north-sound
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Flooded roadways, rivers and landslides hit the North Sound hard today. The good news is that the rain chances will continue to diminish through tomorrow. The bad news is river flooding is still a major concern as we roll into tomorrow.</p> <p>One river we've been keeping our eyes on is the Skagit River by Mount Vernon. This is expected to reach historic levels tomorrow. Unfortunately, the gauge that reads the current river level is now broken due to debris in the flooded waters. The USGS is aware of the issue and is quickly working on a solution. We won't have any updates on the levels until this is sorted out. Below is the tweet that was issued by the NWS informing every one of the problem, and a look at the final river level in the 6 o'clock hour.</p> <p>We're still expecting to hit record breaking levels tomorrow afternoon as the river crests. In fact, flood warnings remain in effect across the North Sound as flooding conditions and landslide threats remain elevated.</p> <p>On top of the flooding tonight, temperatures will plunge. We had a strong cold front pass over the region this afternoon and that's why we saw all those high wind speeds! This will allow for temperatures and snow levels to drop quickly.</p> <p>Snow is already accumulating at this hour and is expected to rise! A Winter Weather Advisory has been issued for elevations over 1,500' tonight with accumulations possibly totaling up to 14"! If you are commuting through the passes tomorrow morning, check in on the roadway conditions. This looks especially rough across Stevens Pass on US 2.</p> <p>As we continue with river flooding, breezy winds, cold temperatures, mountain snow, and landslide threats, be vigilant and aware of your surroundings.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Delta dominates; but worrisome offspring?
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/delta-dominates-world-scientists-watch-worrisome-offspring-2021-11-15/
GIST	<p>CHICAGO, Nov 15 (Reuters) - The Delta variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus now accounts for nearly all of the coronavirus infections globally, fueled by unchecked spread of the novel coronavirus in many parts of the world. So far, vaccines are still able to defend against serious disease and death from Delta, but scientists remain on alert.</p> <p>Here is what we know:</p>

DELTA - STILL DOMINANT

The Delta variant, first detected in India in December 2020, remains the most worrisome version of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

The World Health Organization classifies Delta as a variant of concern, a category that means the variant is capable of increasing transmissibility, causing more severe disease or reducing the benefit of vaccines and treatments.

Delta's "superpower" is its transmissibility, according to Shane Crotty, a virologist at the La Jolla Institute for Immunology in San Diego.

Delta is more than two times as contagious as previous SARS-CoV-2 variants, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Studies suggest it may be more likely to put infected people in the hospital than prior forms of the virus.

Delta also can cause symptoms two to three days sooner than the original coronavirus, giving the immune system less time to mount a defense.

People infected with Delta carry around 1,200 times more virus in their noses compared with the original version of the coronavirus. The amount of virus in vaccinated individuals who become infected with Delta is on par with those who are unvaccinated, and both can transmit the virus to others.

In vaccinated people, however, the amount of virus drops more quickly, so they likely spread the virus for a shorter time.

According to the WHO, Delta makes up 99.5% of all genomic sequences reported to public databases and has "outcompeted" other variants in most countries.

A key exception is South America, where Delta has spread more gradually, and other variants previously seen as possible global threats - notably Gamma, Lambda and Mu - still contribute to a significant proportion of reported cases.

DELTA OFFSPRING

Given Delta's global dominance, many vaccine experts now believe that all future variants will be offshoots of Delta.

One notable Delta "grandchild" is known as AY.4.2 and is concentrated largely in the UK, where it makes up roughly 10% of sequenced virus samples.

AY.4.2 carries two additional mutations in the spike protein, which the virus uses to enter cells. Scientists are still studying what advantage, if any, these mutations confer.

The UK Health Security Agency has designated the AY.4.2 a "Variant Under Investigation." A preliminary analysis suggests it does not significantly impair vaccine effectiveness compared with Delta, but there is some evidence that it could be slightly more transmissible, the agency said.

According to the WHO, AY.4.2 has spread to at least 42 countries, including the United States.

MORE ON THE WAY?

Virus experts are closely watching the evolution of Delta, looking for any sign that it has acquired mutations that would allow the highly transmissible variant to pierce the immune protection of vaccines and natural infection.

	<p>Even so, while current vaccines prevent severe disease and death, they do not block infection. The virus is still capable of replicating in the nose, even among vaccinated people, who can then transmit the disease through tiny, aerosolized droplets.</p> <p>To defeat SARS-CoV-2 will likely require a new generation of vaccines that also block transmission, according to Dr. Gregory Poland, a vaccine developer at the Mayo Clinic. Until then, Poland and other experts say, the world remains vulnerable.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 OPEC chief urges output caution
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/opec-secretary-general-expects-oversupply-oil-market-next-year-2021-11-16/
GIST	<p>ABU DHABI, Nov 16 (Reuters) - OPEC is seeing signs of an oil supply surplus building from next month so its members and allies will have to be "very, very cautious" when they review output policy at regular monthly meetings, the group's secretary general said on Tuesday.</p> <p>The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies, known as OPEC+, is gradually unwinding record production cuts made in 2020 by raising output 400,000 barrels per day per month. OPEC+ holds its next policy meeting on Dec. 2.</p> <p>"The surplus is already beginning in December," OPEC Secretary General Mohammad Barkindo said on the sidelines of an energy conference, when asked if he was sure there would be an excess in oil supply next year.</p> <p>"These are signals that we have to be very, very careful," he told reporters.</p> <p>Barkindo declined to say if he thought OPEC+ would stick to existing policy when it meets on Dec. 2.</p> <p>Brent crude was 52 cents, or 0.6%, higher at \$82.57 a barrel, by 1135 GMT, and U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude climbed 40 cents, or 0.5%, to \$81.28.</p> <p>On Monday, the energy minister for OPEC's United Arab Emirates indicated that OPEC+ would probably stay the course, despite an expected first-quarter surplus.</p> <p>While world oil demand is recovering from the pandemic-induced collapse in 2020, OPEC forecasts that demand growth next year is expected to slow and supply from rival producers such as U.S. shale companies is expected to rise.</p> <p>OPEC follows the level of oil inventories in members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) closely as an indicator of oil market health and is wary of any renewed build up that might depress prices.</p> <p>As of September, oil stocks in OECD member states stood at 2.8 billion barrels, 374 million barrels lower than the same time a year ago, according to OPEC data, reflecting the impact of the OPEC+ supply cuts.</p> <p>"The projections, not only from OPEC but from the IEA (International Energy Agency) and other sources, show that throughout the quarters of next year there will be oversupply in the market using the metric of the OECD stocks," Barkindo said.</p> <p>"This is also further evidence why we should be very cautious and measured in the decisions we take every month."</p> <p>OPEC has a vested interest in ensuring the global economic recovery continues, Barkindo said.</p>

	"We think we are on a trajectory of recovery, and for us in OPEC we will continue to do whatever is necessary that this recovery is not faltered."
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HEADLINE	11/16 Key Libya commander eyes presidency
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-africa-elections-libya-presidential-elections-b873a7ee81fe703cbe40574fcb3dc0c7
GIST	<p>CAIRO (AP) — Libya’s powerful commander, Khalifa Hifter, filed Tuesday as a candidate in the country’s presidential elections next month, as the long-awaited vote faces growing uncertainty.</p> <p>Hifter submitted his candidacy papers Tuesday in the eastern city of Benghazi and announced the move in a video. He said he’s seeking the country’s highest post to “lead our people in a fateful stage.”</p> <p>He called on Libyan people to vote “with the highest levels of awareness and responsibility” so the nation can begin rebuilding and reconciling after a decade of chaos and civil war.</p> <p>Libya has been wracked by chaos since a NATO-backed uprising toppled longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi in 2011. The oil-rich nation had for years been split between a government in the east, backed by Hifter, and a U.N.-supported administration in Tripoli, aided by west-based Libyan militias. Each side has also had the support of mercenaries from countries such as Russia and Syria and different regional powers.</p> <p>Hifter, a dual U.S. and Libyan citizen, commands the self-styled Libyan Arab Armed Forces but delegated his military duties in September to his chief of staff, Abdel-Razek al-Nadhouri, for three months, to meet candidacy terms.</p> <p>Hifter’s announcement comes after Seif al-Islam Gadhafi, the son and one-time heir apparent of the late dictator, submitted candidacy papers Sunday in the southern town of Sabha. Seif al-Islam, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court on charges of crimes against humanity, has spent years largely in hiding.</p> <p>If accepted, both Hifter and Seif al-Islam would be among front-runners in the Dec. 24 vote. They have stirred controversy in western Libya and the capital of Tripoli, the stronghold of their opponents, mostly Islamists.</p> <p>Politicians and militia leaders have already expressed their rejection to their candidacies, and demanded laws governing the presidential and parliamentary elections to be amended.</p> <p>The long-awaited vote still faces other challenges, including occasional infighting among armed groups, and the deep rift that remains between the country’s east and west, split for years by the war, and the presence of thousands of foreign fighters and troops.</p> <p>Hifter’s forces besieged Tripoli in a year-long campaign that tried to capture the city. The campaign ultimately failed last year, leading to U.N.-mediated talks and the formation of a transitional government charged with leading Libya until the parliamentary and presidential elections.</p> <p>In his video comments, Hifter said that if elected, he would prioritize defending Libya’s “integrity and sovereignty.”</p> <p>He has previously modeled his leadership on Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, a close ally. Both have declared war on terrorism — applying the term not only to extremist groups but also more moderate Islamists.</p> <p>The 77-year-old served as a senior officer under Gadhafi but defected in the 1980s during the ruinous war with Chad, in which he and hundreds of soldiers were captured in an ambush. Hifter later spent more than</p>

two decades in Washington, where he is widely believed to have worked with the CIA, before returning to join the anti-Gadhafi uprising in 2011.

Hifter's prominence rose as his forces battled extremists and other rival factions across eastern and later southern Libya, areas now under his control. He has the support of Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, as well as France and Russia.

Rights groups and activists accused Hifter's forces of committing atrocities. Hifter is also a defendant in at least three separate federal lawsuits filed in an American court where plaintiffs allege their loved ones were killed or tortured by his forces.

The lawsuits seek millions of dollars in damages that could be recovered from property that Hifter, and his family still own throughout northern Virginia.

The controversial military commander and Gadhafi's son are the main presidential hopefuls submitting their candidacy papers. Also widely expected to announce presidential bids are Parliament Speaker Agila Saleh and former Interior Minister Fathi Bashaga.

Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah could also become a contender. He said Monday [he'll run for president if that's what the people want](#), but he faces legal obstacles.

Under Libya's elections laws, he would have had to step down from government duties more than three months before an election date. He also pledged when he was appointed to the interim position through U.N.-led talks that he would not run for office in the government that succeeded his. Those talks were marred by allegations of bribery.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Military families' struggle: food insecurity
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/hunger-in-america-military-food-insecurity-142728bcb5479fd2de73750e11dbd458
GIST	<p>SAN DIEGO (AP) — It's a hidden crisis that has existed for years inside one of the most well-funded institutions on the planet and has only worsened during the coronavirus pandemic. As many as 160,000 active-duty military members are having trouble feeding their families.</p> <p>That estimate by Feeding America, which coordinates the work of more than 200 food banks around the country, underscores how long-term food insecurity has extended into every aspect of American life, including the military.</p> <p>The exact scope of the problem is a topic of debate, due to a lack of formal study. But activists say it has existed for years and primarily affects junior-level enlisted service members — ranks E1 to E4 in military parlance — with children.</p> <p>"It's a shocking truth that's known to many food banks across the United States," said Vince Hall, Feeding America's government relations officer. "This should be the cause of deep embarrassment."</p> <p>The group estimates that 29% of troops in the most junior enlisted ranks faced food insecurity during the previous year.</p> <p>"It is what it is," said James Bohannon, 34, a Naval E4 (petty officer third class) in San Diego who relies on food assistance to keep his two daughters fed.</p> <p>"You know what you're signing up for in the military," he said, after emerging from a drive-thru food distribution organized by the local Armed Services YMCA branch. "But I'm not going to lie. It's really tough."</p>

In addition to modest pay for junior enlisted ranks, the frequent moves inherent to military life make it difficult for military spouses to find steady work. Also, the internal military culture of self-sufficiency leaves many reluctant to speak about their difficulties, for fear they will be regarded as irresponsible.

The problem is exacerbated by an obscure Agriculture Department rule that prevents thousands of needy military families from accessing the SNAP government assistance program, commonly known as food stamps.

“It’s one of these things that the American people don’t know about, but it’s a matter of course among military members. We know this,” said Sen. Tammy Duckworth, an Illinois Democrat and former Blackhawk pilot who lost both legs in a helicopter crash in Iraq. “We’re the mightiest military on the face of the earth and yet those who are on the lower rung of our military ranks are -- if they are married and have a child or two-- they’re hungry. How can you focus on carrying out the mission and defending our democracy. If you’re worried about whether or not your kid gets dinner tonight?”

Meredith Knopp, CEO of a food bank in St. Louis and an Army veteran, said the problem cuts across all branches of the military. She recalls being a young officer in Texas when she was approached by a new private with a baby.

“They were getting ready to turn off his electricity because he couldn’t pay his bills,” she said. “It was shocking to me.”

Perhaps the best indication of how entrenched the problem has become is that a robust network of military-adjacent charitable organizations such as the Armed Services YMCA and Blue Star Families has developed an infrastructure of food banks near most major domestic bases.

San Diego may be one of the epicenters of the phenomenon, with high housing costs and multiple military bases within driving distance. For Brooklyn Pittman, whose husband, Matthew, is in the Navy, the move to California from West Virginia this year was a financial shock.

“We had a nice savings built up and then we moved out here and it was rough,” she said. “We still had student loans and everything on top of everything else.”

Their savings quickly disappeared and the small income she earns from dog-sitting didn’t come close to covering the shortfall. For a while, the couple considered sleeping in their car on the base grounds until the next paycheck.

Pittman was one of 320 families participating in the Armed Services YMCA’s late October drive-thru food distribution. The organization had been hosting events like this for more than 10 years, but when the pandemic struck, expanded operations from six sites to 11 around the country and doubled the frequency of the San Diego-area events.

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HEADLINE	11/16 Inflation spoils holidays struggling families
SOURCE	https://www.bloombergquint.com/business/inflation-set-to-spoil-holidays-for-struggling-u-s-families
GIST	<p>Retailers are forecasting a record holiday spending season. But for one in ten Americans, prices rising at the fastest pace in 30 years will dampen the Christmas spirit.</p> <p>Inflation is especially taking a toll on lower-income families, who spend roughly a third of their earnings on essentials like food and energy. It’s eating into recent wage increases, and the timing couldn’t be worse after federal pandemic relief expired for about 7.5 million people.</p> <p>“Anything that in the very short run puts a lot of pressure on family budgets across the board will cause more stress and damage to low-income households because they just have less scope to absorb it,” said Josh Bivens, director of research for the Economic Policy Institute.</p>

The holiday season will lay bare inequalities in the economic recovery. That's because a majority of Americans flush with over \$2 trillion in excess savings accumulated during the pandemic are ready to splurge on gifts and holiday trips.

At the same time, more than 11% of Americans don't plan to spend at all, the greatest share in at least 10 years and more than double that in 2020, according to a Deloitte LLP survey. And the Salvation Army is bracing for a holiday season similar to that after the 2008 financial crisis, according to National Commander Kenneth Hodder.

A report Tuesday is expected to show U.S. retail sales advanced 1.5% in October from the prior month, which would be the most since March, according to estimates as of Monday's market close. However, the data aren't adjusted for inflation, and economists expect that price increases will hurt consumer demand in the near term.

Wages also have increased in the past year amid a tight labor market, especially among lower-paid workers. But prices are rising faster. Inflation-adjusted average hourly earnings in October were 1.2% lower than a year earlier.

There's evidence that the end of pandemic relief has prompted former recipients making less than \$50,000 annually to tighten their budgets. Average spending for those on unemployment benefits dropped 23% compared to the average in May, according to Bank of America Corp. data as of the week ended Oct. 9, the latest available. In the same period, spending of those not claiming benefits has been roughly steady.

For those making \$40,000 to \$90,000, financial cushions will be drained in the next two to three months, according Bloomberg Economics.

Their hardship may not show in nationwide spending numbers. The top 10% of earners make up nearly half of personal outlays in the U.S., according to calculations by Wells Fargo & Co. earlier this year.

And so far there's no sign that wealthier families are pulling back spending. Quite the contrary: Households with an annual income of more than \$150,000 will spend almost double the average amount this holiday season, according to a report from PwC.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Covid cases climb in parts of US
SOURCE	https://www.cnbc.com/2021/11/15/dr-fauci-says-covid-cases-are-starting-to-climb-in-some-areas-of-the-us.html
GIST	<p>Covid-19 cases are starting to climb again in select regions across the U.S. after stabilizing at a high level following this summer's delta surge, White House chief medical advisor Dr. Anthony Fauci said Monday.</p> <p>Fauci's comments came just a day after the country reported a seven-day average of more than 82,000 new cases, up 11% from the week before, according to a CNBC analysis of data from Johns Hopkins University. Nationwide cases were down 57% last week from the delta wave's peak this summer, but a jump in Covid patients in the Midwest and Northeast is fueling the sudden increase.</p> <p>"The only thing that's a little bit disconcerting is that we're beginning to plateau," Fauci said during an interview hosted by the Bipartisan Policy Center. "In other words, the deceleration of cases is now plateaued, and in some areas of the country, we're starting to see a bit of an uptick."</p> <p>Infections had been on the decline for weeks after hitting a delta wave peak of 172,500 new cases per day on Sept. 13. They flattened out at a high level, bouncing between 70,000 and 75,000 new cases a day for nearly three weeks through most of last week, and are now once again increasing.</p>

Average daily cases have jumped by 19% and 37% in the Midwest and Northeast over the last week, respectively, according to Johns Hopkins data. Hospitalizations, which lag an increase in infections, are up 11% over that same period in the Midwest, while the number of currently hospitalized patients with Covid is flat in the Northeast.

Cases and hospitalizations have fallen sharply in the South, where the delta wave hit earliest and hardest over the summer.

About 47,000 patients with the virus are currently hospitalized nationwide, according to a seven-day average of data from the Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. is reporting an average of roughly 1,150 Covid fatalities per day, according to Johns Hopkins data. Both figures are flat over the past week.

Besides the plateauing cases, Fauci, also director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said the U.S. must focus on vaccinating the roughly 60 million people nationwide who have not yet been immunized. That excludes 28 million children ages 5 to 11 who became eligible to receive Pfizer's two-dose Covid vaccine earlier this month, he noted.

"There's a lot of good news, but some challenging news that we really need to address as we go into the winter months," Fauci said.

Fauci added that those who've been fully vaccinated for Covid can gather for the holiday season without concern. But he recommended wearing a mask in indoor congregate settings with cases still hovering at a high level nationwide.

"When you're with your family at home, goodness, enjoy it with your parents, your children, your grandparents," he said. "There's no reason not to do that."

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HEADLINE	11/16 Violence erupts Poland-Belarus border
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/16/europe/poland-belarus-border-crisis-tuesday-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Bruzgi-Kuznica border region, Belarus (CNN) Violence erupted at the Poland-Belarus border on Tuesday, as migrants desperate to cross into the European Union threw stones at Polish border guards who responded with water cannon and tear gas.</p> <p>Polish and Belarusian authorities have blamed one another for the ratcheting of tensions on the border, where thousands of people have traveled in the hope of making it into the EU only to find themselves stuck in freezing conditions.</p> <p>The Polish Border Guard said Tuesday that migrants camped out near the Kuźnica-Bruzgi border crossing were behaving "aggressively," throwing stones and various objects at the Polish services. "In order to prevent illegal border crossing, water cannons were used against aggressive foreigners," the security agency said on Twitter.</p> <p>Poland's Ministry of Defense shared footage on Twitter showing Polish officers and soldiers standing shoulder-to-shoulder with riot shields as rocks were lobbed over the barbed wire border fence, describing the scene as an "attack of migrants." The ministry also accused Belarusian services of equipping migrants with "stun grenades."</p> <p>The spokesperson for Poland's security services, Stanisław Żaryn, wrote on Twitter on Tuesday about the clashes, describing migrants as "storming the border."</p> <p>On the Belarusian side, there were chaotic scenes as crowds of migrants could be seen breaking up concrete blocks and gathering tree branches to throw toward the Polish side of the crossing. Women and</p>

children have been moved back from the border fence, and men, many of them voicing their anger, were amassing.

"We are fighting to stay alive," one man told CNN.

Belarus state media BelTA reported "an aggravation of the situation" on the border on Tuesday, as migrants try "by all means to get to Poland" and Polish authorities respond with tear gas, stun grenades and water cannon, "pouring water on people in the cold."

"People say they are tired of waiting and are ready to break through," according to BelTA.

It's unclear what sparked Tuesday's confrontations but there is a growing sense of frustration among migrants that Europe is not welcoming them.

Rumors have also been swirling over the past 48 hours in the camps where the migrants are located that Poland was prepared to open its humanitarian corridor -- a claim Poland says is not true.

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HEADLINE	11/15 CDC adds to highest-risk destinations
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/cdc-very-high-risk-travel-destinations-november-15/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) — The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention added three popular European nations and a small, idyllic island destination to its list of "very high" risk travel destinations on Monday as a new Covid-19 surge continues to sweep much of Europe.</p> <p>The four destinations moved to Level 4, the highest risk category, are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Czech Republic• Guernsey• Hungary• Iceland <p>With their ornate architecture and rich cultures, the Czech Republic and Hungary have been two of the darlings of Central European travel ever since the fall of the Iron Curtain in the late 20th century.</p> <p>Iceland -- land of glaciers, geysers and volcanoes -- is a big draw among outdoor adventurers. And little charming Guernsey is a self-governing British Crown dependency in the English Channel not far from the coast of France.</p> <p>Destinations that fall into the CDC's "Covid-19 Very High" Level 4 category have had more than 500 cases per 100,000 residents in the past 28 days.</p> <p>People should avoid traveling to locations designated with a "Level 4" notice, the CDC recommends. Anyone who must travel should be fully vaccinated first, the agency advises.</p> <p>Previously, all four destinations had been listed in the Level 3 category of "Covid-19 High" risk. By moving to Level 4, they join the ranks of other travel favorites in Europe and elsewhere. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Belgium• Netherlands• Singapore• Turkey• US Virgin Islands <p>In all, more than 70 destinations are currently at Level 4. The United Kingdom and British Virgin Islands have been lodged at Level 4 since July 19.</p> <p>New entries on Level 3</p>

The Level 3 category -- which applies to destinations that have had between 100 and 500 cases per 100,000 residents in the past 28 days -- had three updates this week.

- **Bahamas**
- **Bolivia**
- **Papua New Guinea**

The move was actually good news for the Bahamas, a tourism-dependent destination, and Papua New Guinea -- both had been at Level 4.

For Bolivia, known for its otherworldly landscapes, the move signals an increase in cases as it previously was listed at Level 2.

You can view the CDC's risk levels for global destinations on its [travel recommendations page](#).

There are other factors for travelers to consider beyond the Covid-19 incidence rates that figure prominently in the CDC's travel notices, according to CNN Medical Analyst Dr. Leana Wen.

"The transmission rates are one guidepost. Another is what precautions are required and followed in the place that you're going and then the third is what are you planning to do once you're there," said Wen, an emergency physician and professor of health policy and management at the George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health.

"Are you planning to visit a lot of attractions and go to indoor bars? That's very different from you're going somewhere where you're planning to lie on the beach all day and not interact with anyone else," said Wen, who is also author of a new book, "Lifelines: A Doctor's Journey in the Fight for Public Health." Most importantly, travelers should be vaccinated, she said.

Update on Level 2

The CDC moved exotic **Morocco**, in the northwest corner of Africa, down from Level 3 to Level 2. Destinations carrying the "Level 2: Covid-19 Moderate" designation have seen 50 to 99 Covid-19 cases per 100,000 residents in the past 28 days.

Keep in mind the CDC list updates weekly, and the situation in any country can change for better or worse from week to week.

Level 1 and no ratings

In the category of "Level 1: Covid-19 Low" destinations, fewer than 50 new cases per 100,000 residents have been logged over the past 28 days.

Six destinations moved into Level 1 on November 15:

- **Gambia**
- **India**
- **Japan**
- **Liberia**
- **Mozambique**
- **Pakistan**

India's move to Level 1 is particularly noteworthy as [it was in a horrific crisis with Covid-19 this past spring](#).

Finally, there are destinations for which the CDC has an "unknown" risk because of a lack of information. As of November 15, that list included Madagascar, Cambodia, Nicaragua and Macau.

In its [broader travel guidance](#), the CDC has recommended avoiding all international travel until you are fully vaccinated.

	"Fully vaccinated travelers are less likely to get and spread Covid-19. However, international travel poses additional risks, and even fully vaccinated travelers might be at increased risk for getting and possibly spreading some Covid-19 variants," the agency said.
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HEADLINE	11/15 Recall: Costco Kool-Aid mix
SOURCE	https://www.foxbusiness.com/lifestyle/costco-alerts-customers-to-recall-of-kool-aid-mix-that-may-contain-metal-or-glass
GIST	<p>Costco is warning customers who purchased a certain Kool-Aid mix that batches of the product are being recalled over concerns that they might contain small fragments of metal or glass.</p> <p>The retailer issued an alert from Kraft Heinz – the company that makes Kool-Aid – explaining that the manufacturer and the FDA have issued recalls of 82.5oz Kool-Aid Tropical Punch Mix with "Best When Used By" dates of Aug. 31 and Sept. 1 "due to the potential presence of foreign material, specifically very small pieces of metal or glass," according to the message obtained by Nextar Media Wire.</p> <p>The outlet noted that "those materials may have been accidentally introduced to the product during the manufacturing process."</p> <p>Consumers who purchased the recalled batches of the Kool-Aid mix can return the products for a full refund, and anyone with questions about the recall can call Kraft Heinz at (855) 713-9237.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 CDC: salami in foodborne outbreak
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/salami-salmonella-recall-citterio/
GIST	<p>Federal health officials say an outbreak of salmonella tied to Citterio-brand salami snacks sold nationwide has now sickened 31 people in 10 states.</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is investigating the rash of illness tied to recalled Citterio Premium Italian-Style Salame Sticks, the agency said Friday in an updated food safety alert. Consumers are urged to throw away the products with best-by dates through January 23, 2022.</p> <p>Euro Foods last week recalled about 119,000 pounds of salami stick products with "EST. 4010" inside the U.S. Department of Agriculture mark of inspection shipped to retail locations nationwide and exported to Bermuda.</p> <p>The illnesses started on September 18 and continued through October 18, including six hospitalizations, according to a recall notice posted by the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service.</p> <p>Two unopened packages of the product collected by the California Department of Public Health as part of the ongoing investigation tested positive for salmonella.</p> <p>The agency also urged consumers to wash containers and counters that may have come into contact with the cured-meat product, which which sold at grocery stores across the U.S. including Trader Joe's and Wegmans.</p> <p>Most of those reported ill in the outbreak are younger than 18 years old. While a majority recover without treatment, children younger than 5 and adults over 65 are more likely to get very sick from salmonella, the CDC stated in an update of its prior alert.</p> <p>The outbreak includes residents of California, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia.</p>

	<p>On an annual basis, the bacteria causes about 1.35 million illnesses, 26,500 hospitalizations and 420 deaths in the U.S., the CDC estimates. Earlier this month, the CDC had warned consumers about another salmonella outbreak, with fresh onions identified as the source of infections across 37 states.</p> <p>Most people infected with salmonella develop diarrhea, fever and stomach cramps six hours to six days after exposure, with the illness usually lasting from four to seven days.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Wind, rain: power outages, grounded flights
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/weather/article/power-outages-sea-tac-flights-grounded-from-wind-16623144.php
GIST	<p>Thousands are out of power and all flights leaving Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and Boeing Field were grounded for several minutes Monday as Western Washington was buffeted by strong winds and heavy rainfall.</p> <p>The grounding at Sea-Tac Airport also affected flights already in the air — they were asked to delay their landing for about 15 minutes, according to the FFA's website. Departing and arriving flights are expected to continue experiencing short delays, the website says.</p> <p>More than 155,000 people statewide are currently without power, according to PowerOutage.US. In King County, 26,446 customers are currently without power. In Pierce and Snohomish counties, the number of customers without power are 14,818 and 24,548 respectively.</p> <p>Puget Sound Energy, which supplies power to most of Western Washington, is reporting 102,828 customers without power as of 4:33 p.m. You can view a list of all electric providers in Washington and how many outages they're reporting here.</p> <p>More winds and heavy rainfall are expected throughout Monday, according to the National Weather Service (NWS) in Seattle. The area is currently being battered by an atmospheric river, a concentrated corridor of moisture that shoots wetness into an area for an extended period of time. Conditions are expected to lighten up Tuesday.</p> <p>The peak wind speeds recorded Monday throughout the area are listed on the NWS website. Seattle experienced a high of 48 mph, while the Sea-Tac Airport saw a high of 58 mph. To the south, Tacoma and Olympia saw highs of 47 and 55 mph, respectively. To the north, Everett saw a high of 53 mph. The NWS says wind speeds have peaked and will gradually decrease overnight.</p> <p>Flooding, which occurred throughout the region as the inclement weather continues, lead to an evacuation order for the small town of Hamilton in Skagit County. A state of emergency was also declared for Whatcom County, where some communities experienced major flooding. On Twitter, the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office posted photos of deputies in a rescue vehicle in a neighborhood where water had risen above the tires of cars sitting in the street.</p> <p>The U.S Coast Guard also assisted with evacuation efforts for people living near Highway 110 west of the city of Forks on the Olympic Peninsula. On Twitter, the Coast Guard said about 10 people were in danger due to flooding. No injuries were reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Airbus logs big deals at Dubai air show
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/boeing-aerospace/airbus-logs-big-deals-at-dubai-air-show/
GIST	<p>Plane makers, airlines and aircraft financiers are gathered in Dubai for the first global air show since the pandemic began. The mood is surprisingly optimistic, after COVID-19 plunged the industry into its worst-ever crisis.</p> <p>Airbus CEO Guillaume Faury told Bloomberg TV on Monday he's starting to see signs of a recovery in aircraft demand.</p>

The planemaker notched its second big order of the expo, a 111-jet mix of narrow- and wide-bodies that includes its first deal for the coming A350F freighters, with leasing giant Air Lease Corp.

That followed a massive 255-plane narrow-body deal on Sunday with a group of discount airlines led by Wizz Air Holdings.

Cargo was a major theme Monday as Emirates reached a deal with Israel Aerospace Industries to convert Boeing 777-300ERs.

Boeing expressed optimism over 737 MAX sales and deliveries in China, after the nation's regulator signaled it is close to ending a more than 2 1/2-year grounding of the single-aisle workhorse.

"We're hopeful," Stan Deal, who heads Boeing's commercial airplanes division, said in an interview Sunday. "We've seen some orders on freighters that have come through and we're just encouraged. We know that President Biden and President Xi are talking next week, so those are all encouraging signs."

Meanwhile, however, Emirates President Tim Clark said he's conducting a fleet "reset," which might amount to a shift away from Boeing.

Airbus announced its first freighter sale as it tries to chip into Boeing's lead with a new cargo version of the A350 wide-body — though the deal comes with an asterisk.

Leasing giant Air Lease Corp. signed a letter of intent to buy seven A350Fs, along with 100 narrow-body jets and four A330neo twin-aisles. Because it's not a firm deal, Air Lease could ultimately back out, or another customer could potentially swoop in with a commitment before an Air Lease order is finalized.

In one of the first dividends for aviation companies from a normalization of relations between the UAE and Israel last year, Israel Aerospace Industries reached a \$1 billion agreement with Emirates to convert four Boeing 777-300ER passenger jets into freighters, starting in 2023. The work will be carried out at a site operated by Etihad in Abu Dhabi, IAI said. The agreement has potential to provide passenger-to-freighter conversion services to more aircraft, as airlines and manufacturers seek to exploit growing demand for air cargo.

Airbus' 255-plane deal with Wizz Air and three Indigo Partners stablemates justifies the case for ramping up production to as many as 75 A320-series jets per month, CEO Faury said in an interview. He said most of the deliveries will come in the second half of this decade, adding to long-term visibility on demand. As for further orders at the show: "Always expect more but we'll see what the timing looks like."

"We see traffic rates going up," Airbus' Faury said. "This is still a COVID-19 situation, we're not at the end but we're starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel." Faury expects a full recovery by 2023-25, with Asia trailing. Airbus shares rose as much as 3.1% on Monday, after the planemaker secured a new order.

The global carbon market agreement at COP26 in Glasgow was a "key milestone" for the industry, Faury said. He said the planemaker, which plans to launch a hydrogen-powered jet by 2035, wants to be a leader within the industry on decarbonization.

"We're fully convinced we need to decarbonize the industry, there's no other way and the sooner we do it the better because each and every ton of carbon that goes into the air contributes to global warming," he said. "What has happened in Glasgow with COP really goes in the same direction."

Airbus has been quiet around plans for urban air mobility, while flying taxi startups like Joby Aviation and Vertical Aerospace lock up airline customers. The European planemaker said Monday it's ready to announce airline, airport and industrial partnerships in coming weeks.

	<p>Head of UAM Balkiz Sarihan said Airbus hopes to certify its electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft with European regulators EASA by 2024. While Airbus welcomes competition, it says it's more focused on getting the technology right than being first. The company unveiled a change to its concept that it called City Airbus Next Gen at a sustainability summit in September, to move to a fixed-wing design.</p> <p>Emirates President Tim Clark has perfected the act of playing archrivals Airbus and Boeing off one another. Speaking in an interview, Clark said he's conducting a fleet "reset." That, in turn, might amount to a shift away from Boeing, which the executive singled out as still having issues to resolve around the 777X wide-body, for which Emirates is the biggest buyer.</p> <p>"You can never say never," he told Bloomberg Television. "There are issues still out there which Boeing has got to resolve. We also have aircraft from Airbus coming in. So we'll have a look at all that and see how it best fits the network. In terms of mix and the absolute number that could all change."</p> <p>Boeing is closing in on orders for its planned 777X freighter and is nearing a narrow-body deal with Indian startup airline Akasa, Bloomberg reported last week. That deal would mark a critical breakthrough in India, where Airbus is the leader.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Seattle police: 2 suspects 6 bank robberies
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/seattle-police-searching-for-suspects-allegedly-involved-in-6-bank-robberies/281-8457071b-ceb0-44f8-b35b-c4cb142d923b
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Police are searching for two suspected bank robbers believed to be involved in multiple cases in the greater Seattle area.</p> <p>They are believed to be responsible for at least six bank robberies over the past three weeks, three which occurred in Seattle.</p> <p>During the robberies, according to police, the suspects hand the teller a note demanding money. Their behavior has become increasingly violent, with one suspect firing several shots through a glass door of a Federal Way bank.</p> <p>People who can identify either suspect is asked to contact the lead detective at David.Simmons@Seattle.gov.</p>
Return to Top	<i>Click on source link to view photographs captured on video cameras</i>

HEADLINE	11/15 Public safety divide: fight over SPD budget
SOURCE	https://southseattleemerald.com/2021/11/15/seattles-divide-on-public-safety-is-fueling-a-fight-over-next-years-police-budget/
GIST	<p>After an election that largely snubbed progressive candidates, advocates calling for cuts to police budgets are working to convince Seattle leaders to follow through with promises to reform law enforcement and fund alternatives to dealing with the city's problems.</p> <p>A revised budget proposal out of the Seattle City Council this week would make about \$10.8 million in cuts to Mayor Jenny Durkan's proposed 2022 funding increases to the Seattle Police Department (SPD). Projected revenue for Seattle's general fund has fallen by about \$15 million since Durkan released her proposed \$7.1 billion City budget in September.</p> <p>Durkan has said the investment in police is needed to address higher-than-normal officer departures in recent years and ensure fast response times to emergencies. But councilmembers and community advocates have challenged that idea, arguing that investments in services such as housing and education do more to improve public safety and improve the resiliency of vulnerable communities.</p>

A rebalanced budget package [introduced last Tuesday](#), Nov. 9, by City Council Select Budget Committee Chair Teresa Mosqueda would reduce Durkan's proposed \$365.4 million police budget to \$354.6 million. Overall, Mosqueda's budget would amount to an \$8.3 million (2.3%) cut to SPD funding compared to this year's budget, while Durkan's plan would expand police spending by \$2.5 million (0.7%).

Meanwhile, the [Seattle Solidarity Budget](#) coalition, which represents a number of local groups focused on improving public services and investing in Seattle's BIPOC communities, is calling for an additional \$29 million to be cut from next year's police budget. The group sees the final weeks of the budget process as a chance to cement popular calls for police reform that took center stage during widespread community protests last year, following the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Already both Durkan, who oversaw SPD's response to last year's protests, and Mayor-elect Bruce Harrell, who won by a 59–41 margin in last week's elections, have signalled their opposition to the amendments in Mosqueda's plan. In a [statement](#) last week, Durkan called the election results "a clear rejection of the City Council's plans to defund SPD," deriding the council budget proposal as "déjà vu all over again with the Council proposing one of the largest cuts to public safety to date."

Harrell said the cuts are "in direct conflict with what Seattle voters demanded."

"The City Council needs to listen to voters' desire for immediate investments in public safety and reverse the proposed \$10 million cut to the SPD budget," he said in a statement.

Another public City Council hearing is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, Nov. 18. The full council is expected to vote on a final budget on the following Monday, Nov. 22, at which point Durkan can sign the budget into law, veto it, or allow it to become law without her signature.

Advocates from the Seattle Solidarity Budget are framing the debate as an opportunity for Seattle to secure a victory in their hard-fought effort to draw down funding of SPD. The department has been under federal court oversight since 2012 following an investigation into excessive force and biased policing against People of Color. They also used tear gas against protestors last year despite a [City ban](#).

"We know that change in society happens in short bursts," said Angélica Cházaro, a [Decriminalize Seattle](#) organizer and UW law professor, who spoke at a Solidarity Budget [event](#) on Tuesday, Nov. 9. "We take giant leaps — like the one that we've all been taking together these past 18 months, with beginning a defund from police and investment in community — and then they slide back a bit, right? ... Last year's uprising created a giant leap forward. And while the election may point to some backsliding, we know we're headed in the right direction."

"What can we do with these last few weeks of this budget fight to make sure that everything, that giant leap we've taken these past 18 months, is cemented into a budget that protects our wins and protects our people," she asked, "knowing that some of the people who are now in office are people who want to go back?"

Cházaro said that while there's much to celebrate about Mosqueda's proposal, it also has a ways to go. Seattle Solidarity Budget wants to see an additional \$29 million in cuts to SPD, said Travonna Thompson-Wiley, from [Black Action Coalition](#), including eliminating a department slush fund and rolling back 134 additional positions the department would fund in 2022 but has no immediate plans to fill.

"No other City department gets extra funding that has no plans to hire in the future," Thompson-Wiley said, adding that some departments actually have staffing plans that are underfunded. "We can go ahead and direct those funds to the Human Services Department, just for a start."

Rather than police, Solidarity Budget advocates are calling on councilmembers to invest in programs and services aimed at improving equity by building stronger communities. Defunding SPD, speakers said, is part of the coalition's broader push to prioritize the environment, housing, education, transportation, childcare and nutrition, Indigenous sovereignty, and criminal justice reform.

“We’re always invited to sort of silo our fights, and the Solidarity Budget, we, again, refuse those distinctions, because we know that our fights are so intertwined and interlinked,” Cházaro said. “We’re trying to say, you know, public safety and the Green New Deal are synonymous, public safety and housing are synonymous, public safety and Indigenous sovereignty are synonymous, and education, and day care, you know — the things that actually create public safety.”

Solidarity Budget supporters and others spoke last week during a City Council [public comment period](#) and at budget committee meetings. They’re also organizing a [Protect Our Wins, Protect Our People](#) rally at City Hall the evening of Tuesday, Nov. 16.

Most of Mosqueda’s proposed SPD reductions come from cuts to Durkan’s proposed increases to SPD hiring incentives (\$1.1 million), technology projects (\$1.2 million), the Community Service Officers (CSO) program expansion (\$1.3 million), expected savings from officers leaving the force (\$2.7 million), and “other salary savings and efficiency savings,” according to the budget chair’s presentation at last Tuesday’s committee meeting.

While a slide in that presentation described the changes as \$10.8 million in reductions to SPD’s 2022 budget, councilmembers and staff, however, said at a budget meeting on Friday that to characterize the change as a cut to SPD was misleading.

“It is not as simple as just saying there was a \$15 million shortfall announced two Wednesdays ago,” Mosqueda said. “It is not as simple as saying that \$10 million of that came from SPD.”

Instead, she said, the deliberation involved “scouring the budget to see if there was any dollars that would be sitting in a coffer and not used for the purposes of 2022’s recovery and resiliency.” Through more than a hundred amendments, the proposal reallocates nearly \$70 million to council priorities, including housing and behavioral health, while also addressing the projected \$15 million shortfall.

Apparent cuts shouldn’t be taken as comments about the programs themselves, Mosqueda said, “but if there was dollars that couldn’t be deployed in 2022, we wanted to make sure we use those for the incredible need we see in community right now.”

Council staff noted that Durkan’s budget plan from September relies on nearly \$150 million in revenue from the City’s JumpStart payroll tax to the City’s general fund — more than \$60 million than is allowed under current policies — a move that would reduce future spending capacity by that amount in future years. They also said Durkan’s budget includes \$70 million for participatory budgeting and the City’s Equitable Communities Initiative but fails to identify where that money would come from.

“These are many priorities that the Council shares, but they were put in this budget without an ongoing funding source to support them,” said Central Staff Director Esther Handy.

Mosqueda at Friday’s meeting pushed back against some of what she called “misconceptions” about the budget, saying that her proposal includes more than \$7 million in new investments in SPD. Durkan’s plan, by contrast, contained upward of \$17 million in new police spending.

“There was requests for an increase in over \$17 million in SPD,” Mosqueda said. “The proposed budget still allows for nearly \$7 million of those increases while we also accomplish some salary savings. That’s the distinction: \$17 million increase suggested [versus] a near \$7 million increase in the proposed budget while also capturing cost savings in other aspects. But there still is that increased investment that we would like to highlight.”

Councilmember Lisa Herbold, vice chair of the budget committee, added that she was “very frustrated seeing all the headlines saying that your proposed budget proposes a \$10 million cut in SPD’s budget. That is not the case. Your proposed budget proposes a \$7 million *increase* over the 2021 SPD budget.”

While Mosqueda's proposal does "cut \$10.8 million [general fund dollars] from SPD," according to the staff presentation, that money comes from positions the department isn't currently expected to fill. The proposal would at the same time increase funding for specific SPD programs, for example putting \$4.6 million toward overtime pay.

Council staffer Greg Doss tried to explain the confusion at Friday's meeting.

"When we spoke last, on Wednesday, we talked about the \$10.9 million in reductions to SPD, and we used the term 'reduction' because we were talking about these changes relative to the 2022 proposed budget," Doss said. "What happened when the mayor created the 2022 proposed budget is that she sent a budget that was appropriating somewhere around \$19 million dollars of salary funding for officers that would not be needed because there are not officers there to take the salaries."

While that unused money might normally be redirected to the general fund, Doss explained, Durkan's proposed budget retains the money and reallocates it to specific SPD spending items.

"The council made some decisions to reduce these items, and it *appears* as though the council is making a cut," Doss said. "And that is not necessarily a fair way to portray it."

Mosqueda's budget is effectively rejecting new SPD spending items proposed by Durkan, he added. "That is more true than the case that the council is cutting the SPD base budget."

Semantics of the funding decisions aside, any reduction in SPD's overall budget would be a tiny slice of what seemed possible last year. Amid the height of local protests against police violence and racism, what was seen as a veto-proof majority of City Councilmembers [briefly committed to cutting SPD's budget by 50%](#), then adopted far more modest reforms.

Though equity advocates generally support Mosqueda's new budget proposal as a meaningful step toward community-focused public safety, some have criticized it further for eliminating Durkan's planned expansion of the City's CSO [program](#). CSOs are civilian employees who support SPD patrols but don't respond to criminal calls, instead [helping residents and businesses navigate services](#). Many supporters of reform have acknowledged the program is an important step away from aggressive policing.

Durkan's budget proposal earmarked an additional \$1.3 million for the CSO program, which would add six additional CSO positions to the City's current number of 18. Part of Mosqueda's proposed \$10.8 million cut to SPD would eliminate that extra money, keeping funding at current levels.

"To cut the CSO program is just a continuance of your tone deafness and total silence around violence impacting our communities," journalist Omari Salisbury [wrote](#) Wednesday on Twitter to Mosqueda and the City Council.

Nikkita Oliver, a community organizer and executive director of Creating Justice, who is also a member of the Solidarity Budget coalition, pushed back on Salisbury's claim the amendment qualified as a cut. "There is a difference between a cut & not expanding," they [tweeted](#) Wednesday. "It is true this is not an expansion but it's also true this is not a cut."

Mosqueda said last week that the elimination of the additional proposed CSO funding would be done as part of a process of deciding what department should oversee the relatively new program. "The work of the CSOs is not in question," she said at a [budget committee meeting](#) on Wednesday. "The ongoing question is the placement and location of CSOs in the future."

She emphasized that the plan would still allow for the hiring of 125 new police officers, as Durkan has proposed: "Absolutely every single position the mayor has planned to hire [is] currently included in this budget."

Hundreds of SPD officers have left their jobs since last year, with many citing a climate in Seattle that was hostile to police. More than 325 officers have departed in the past year, a situation Police Chief Adrian Diaz has described as a “staffing crisis.” Currently SPD has just over a thousand deployable officers.

In response, Durkan issued an emergency order late last month to create \$10,000 to \$25,000 [hiring bonuses](#) for police officers and 911 dispatch workers.

Now some who previously left the force are coming back. Nine officers have returned in recent months, KOMO News [reported](#) Thursday, Nov. 11, including Sgt. Lauren Truscott, who was sworn in Wednesday morning after leaving the department last year. “I was honored to be with SPD,” said Truscott, who joined the Issaquah Police Department [in January](#). “I left for a promotional opportunity.”

With debate over police funding likely to intensify ahead of the City Council’s budget deadline, Mosqueda’s proposal will probably be amended. It remains to be seen whether councilmembers will compromise with Durkan and Harrell’s call to reverse the police budget cuts or whether they’ll consider further reductions, as called for by Seattle Solidarity Budget activists.

Regardless of the outcome, Cházaro of Decriminalize Seattle said one crucial victory of organizers’ past 18 months has been to successfully challenge the conventional view that more police means better public safety.

“What this election proved is that the facts of police violence are now incontestable and cannot be hidden any longer,” she said. “We have changed the conversation about public safety. We have broken open the notion that public safety and police are synonymous.”

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HEADLINE	11/15 SDOT: new traffic camera pilot program
SOURCE	https://sdotblog.seattle.gov/2021/11/15/dont-block-the-box-traffic-cameras/
GIST	<p>We have chosen eight locations around downtown Seattle to add new traffic cameras to automatically enforce laws preventing people in cars from illegally driving in bus lanes or blocking crosswalks and intersections. The locations were selected in coordination with the Seattle Police Department (SPD). These cameras are intended to help improve public safety, reduce congestion, keep transit moving, and increase mobility for people with disabilities.</p> <p>While warnings and tickets will not be issued until 2022, the City plans to install signs in all eight locations this month to ensure the public has adequate notice to learn the rules of the road and avoid receiving tickets.</p> <p>Starting in 2022, the new traffic cameras will record the rear license plates of vehicles violating the law. The first time someone is caught they will be mailed a warning letter, and after that they will be mailed a \$75 ticket. All locations will have clear signs and pavement markings, with white lines indicating where the intersection “box” begins, and red paint indicating lanes which are restricted to buses only.</p> <p>Cameras are being installed at four busy intersections to prevent people driving from blocking crosswalks and intersections after the light turns red (also known as “blocking the box”). It is illegal for drivers to enter an intersection unless they have a clear path to make it all the way through. This behavior is illegal and dangerous, increasing the risk of crashes and preventing people in crosswalks from safely crossing the street. This is especially dangerous for people with disabilities, as people who are blind, use wheelchairs, or have other mobility needs can get stuck in harm’s way in the middle of the street with no safe way back to the sidewalk. Blocking the box also increases congestion, preventing people from moving and bringing traffic to a standstill.</p> <p>Other cameras will monitor bus lanes in five locations to prevent people from illegally driving where they are not allowed. This helps keeps buses moving, which in turn makes our transit system more reliable, benefiting everyone. Buses move more people at a time than individual cars, and every person taking a bus</p>

means one less car on the road, which is an incredibly important way to help address congestion and climate change for everyone.

Cameras will be installed in eight locations in downtown Seattle, South Lake Union, Belltown, Pioneer Square, and State Route 99. These locations were chosen based on their history of problematic and ongoing violations of people blocking the intersection or driving in the transit lane.

The [Washington State Legislature authorized the use of cameras to enforce bus lane and intersection violations in 2020](#), as part of a pilot project authorized in certain locations until July 2023.

[Under state law](#), half of the net revenue from the traffic cameras will go to a [Washington Traffic Safety Commission](#) fund for bicycle and pedestrian safety projects, and the other half of the net revenue must be used to build safety and mobility improvements for people with disabilities in Seattle. SDOT plans to invest this in building more [accessible walk signals](#) which vibrate and make a noise to let people with limited vision or hearing know when it is safe to cross the street.

The cameras will work like photo-enforcement cameras in other parts of Seattle which issue tickets for red light violations or speeding in school safety zones. This will mean fewer police officers making in-person traffic stops, so that police can focus on other public safety needs. This also makes enforcement more consistent, objective, and fair.

To protect privacy, the cameras will only record vehicle license plates and not the people inside the car. The photos are only intended to be used for enforcing the bus lane and blocking the box laws, and are not intended for other law enforcement action.

Here are the locations where traffic cameras are being installed:

- Aurora Ave N at Galer St (Transit Lane)
- 3rd Ave at James St (Transit Lane)
- 1st Ave at Columbia St (Transit Lane)
- 3rd Ave and Stewart St (Transit Lane)
- 4th Ave at Battery St (Don't Block the Box)
- 4th Ave at Jackson St (Don't Block the Box)
- Westlake Ave N at Valley St/Roy St (Don't Block the Box)
- 5th Ave at Olive Way (Both Transit Lane and Don't Block the Box)

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HEADLINE	11/15 Report: biased policing from PCSD
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3235643/pierce-county-exec-report-showing-biased-policing-from-sheriffs-department-is-very-concerning/
GIST	<p>A newly-released report revealed that instances in 2020 where deputies with the Pierce County Sheriff's Department used force on suspects disproportionately targeted Black residents. County Executive Bruce Dammeier spoke to KIRO Radio's Gee & Ursula Show to break down the numbers, and go over what his office plans to do next.</p> <p>In total, the study found that the sheriff's department was five times as likely to use force on Black residents as they were white residents. Despite the fact that Black people make up roughly 7% of the county's population, that demographic accounted for over 23% of incidents where deputies used force. Conversely, white residents — who make up 72% of the local population — experienced use of force just over 64% of the time.</p> <p>Those were numbers that Dammeier found extremely troubling.</p> <p>"The information in this report, some of it was very concerning to me on behalf of our county," he noted. "It's not anything you would ever want to see in your community."</p>

	<p>Providing further analysis was the county’s Assistant Budget Director Julie Demuth, who emphasized that the numbers are clear regarding the appearance of bias in these use of force incidents.</p> <p>“We’ve reviewed the data in depth,” Demuth described. “We’ve run multiple scenarios of the data using various measures of force, and most importantly, different measures of a baseline. Every way that we analyze the data shows the same pattern of disproportionality — we are very confident that the results of the report indicate disproportionality, and that there’s really no other way to interpret the data.”</p> <p>Dammeier hopes to address this problem through a county-level criminal justice workgroup, comprised of representatives from his office, the county prosecutor’s office, the public defender office, and the sheriff’s department. That workgroup was also responsible for compiling the study in the first place.</p> <p>Moving forward, the group has been asked to come forward with a recommendation on next steps.</p> <p>“What is the appropriate way that we use the tools to really effectively assess the use of force?” Dammeier described.</p> <p>In the near term, he says the sheriff’s department plans to institute “special additional review any time physical force is used on any minors.” The hope is to also expand the use of body-worn cameras and dash cameras to keep an “independent record” of incidents as they occur.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Canada: First Nation exposed to toxins
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/15/canada-first-nation-cancer-causing-chemicals-aamjiwnaang
GIST	<p>A First Nations community in Canada has learned that levels of a cancer-causing chemical in its air are 44 times higher than is considered safe, after years of fighting for the data.</p> <p>Aamjiwnaang First Nation in Ontario is surrounded on all sides by petrochemical facilities, and members have long suspected that the facilities in “Chemical Valley” have exposed them to potentially dangerous substances.</p> <p>Data obtained using freedom of information laws by Global News has revealed elevated levels of benzene, a known carcinogen, and sulphur dioxide – and indicated the provincial government had previously known the levels were far higher than the province’s standard.</p> <p>After a 2019 visit to Aamjiwnaang, Baskut Tuncak, the UN special rapporteur on toxic chemicals, told the Guardian: “I was struck by the incredible proximity of the affected First Nation to dozens of intense chemical production and processing facilities, which resulted in incredible releases of pollution and waste affecting the [residents’] health.”</p> <p>A bill meant to tackle environmental racism passed through a number of committees earlier this year, but died after a snap election was called by the Liberal government.</p> <p>The bill would have required the federal government to collect data on where environmental hazards such as pulp mills, dumps and mines are located and study whatever links exist between race and health. The bill would have also required Ottawa to compensate communities whose air, water and land is poisoned by industry, and to ensure they are consulted on future development projects.</p> <p>The Ontario government has recently moved forward with proposed new rules that would strengthen emissions caps as well as require companies to disclose emissions data with affected First Nations. Already, emissions have seen a drop in recent years but are still above the province’s benchmark.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Bird flu outbreaks: Europe, Asia on alert
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/15/bird-flu-europe-asia

GIST	<p>Several outbreaks of severe bird flu in Europe and Asia have been reported in recent days to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), in a sign the virus is spreading quickly again.</p> <p>The spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza, commonly called bird flu, has put the poultry industry on alert after previous outbreaks led to the culling of tens of millions of birds.</p> <p>It is attracting the attention too of epidemiologists as the virus can be transmitted to humans. China has reported 21 human infections with the H5N6 subtype of avian influenza so far this year, more than in the whole of 2020.</p> <p>South Korea reported an outbreak at a farm of around 770,000 poultry in Chungcheongbuk-do, the OIE said on Monday, citing a report from the South Korean authorities. All animals were slaughtered.</p> <p>Also in Asia, Japan reported its first outbreak of the 2021 winter season, at a poultry farm in the north-east of the country, the OIE said, confirming a statement last week by Japan's agriculture ministry. The serotype in this outbreak was H5N8.</p> <p>In Europe, Norway reported an H5N1 bird flu outbreak in the Rogaland region in a flock of 7,000 birds, the OIE said.</p> <p>Bird flu circulates naturally among wild birds, and when they migrate to the UK from mainland Europe in winter the disease can be spread to poultry and other captive birds.</p> <p>The Belgian government put the country on increased risk for bird flu, ordering poultry to be kept indoors as of Monday, after a highly pathogenic variant of bird flu was identified in a wild goose near Antwerp.</p> <p>This followed a similar move in neighbouring France earlier this month and in the Netherlands in October.</p> <p>Earlier this month, a bird flu prevention zone was declared across Great Britain, legally requiring all bird keepers to follow strict biosecurity measures after a flock of poultry was culled near Dundee in Scotland in response to a bird flu outbreak.</p> <p>Bird flu can affect humans in rare cases if people touch infected birds, their droppings or bedding, or while preparing infected poultry for cooking.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Tyson: meat prices rise as costs escalate
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/tysons-meat-production-falls-amid-labor-shortages-11636983508?mod=hp_lead_pos4
GIST	<p>Tyson Foods Inc. reported a jump in sales after sharply raising prices for its beef, chicken and pork, citing growing costs the company said were likely to persist.</p> <p>The Arkansas-based meat giant lifted prices across all of its major divisions as executives said Tyson's cost of cattle jumped by one-fifth year over year in the quarter ended Oct. 2. Tyson's logistics expenses climbed about 30%, they said, while the company also has paid more for ingredients and packaging materials.</p> <p>"I can't think of a single thing that has either stayed the same or gone down," said Donnie King, Tyson's chief executive, on a Monday conference call with reporters.</p> <p>Tyson, which produces roughly 1 of every 5 pounds of chicken, beef and pork in the U.S., and other meatpackers have been struggling to keep up with demand from supermarkets and reopening restaurants. A nationwide labor shortage has left many processing plants understaffed, industry officials have said.</p>

Increasing wages and [adding new benefits](#), like Tyson's recent introduction of a sick leave policy for plant workers, have helped improve staffing, executives said. The efforts also are adding costs at the same time that poor weather has driven up the price of grain, typically the main expense in raising livestock and poultry.

In response, Tyson executives said they are charging food-service and retail customers more for their meat and grocery products.

Over the most recent quarter, Tyson said, the company's average beef prices rose by nearly one-third compared with last year, while pork prices increased by 38% and chicken about 19%.

"The inflation we incur needs to be passed on," said Stewart Glendinning, Tyson's chief financial officer. "Some of the inflation for us has been substantial."

Rising prices helped lift Tyson's revenue by 12% to \$12.8 billion in the company's fiscal fourth quarter, while earnings increased to \$1.36 billion, more than doubling from the same quarter last year. The results topped analysts' expectations. Tyson shares increased 2.7% in midday trading Monday.

Tyson's profit margins also improved, the company said. Operating margins in Tyson's beef business jumped to 22.9% in the most recent quarter, compared with 9.7% in the same quarter in 2019. Its pork business improved over that period to 4.7% and its prepared-foods operating margins increased to 36.5%, from 4.8% in 2019. Margins in Tyson's chicken business were negative in the most recent quarter, the company said, as it dealt with labor challenges and problems in its poultry-breeding operations.

Other companies, including consumer products makers and industrial manufacturers, also have reported improved profitability this year as they [raised prices in response to inflation](#). About two-thirds of the largest U.S. publicly traded companies have reported higher margins so far this year compared with the same period in 2019, before the Covid-19 pandemic, according to data from FactSet.

Mr. Glendinning said Tyson would monitor its own costs as it determines what prices to charge customers over the next year. Some of its expenses, such as the cost of ingredients and cattle, track commodity-market movements, while others, like wages, are more fixed, he said. Futures markets currently suggest that grain prices, which have climbed this year, are likely to stay at similar levels in 2022, he said.

Tyson said that some meat production is likely to remain constrained next year, citing U.S. Department of Agriculture forecasts that domestic beef and pork production both are on track to decline by 2%, while chicken production is set to increase slightly.

Consumers are starting to respond to higher meat prices, according to grocery chain operators. Some shoppers are trading down from beef to less-expensive options like pork or chicken, and purchasing more store-brand meat products versus name-brand cuts that tend to cost more, supermarket officials said. Meat industry executives have said [private-label products have tended to be more available](#) as major brands struggle with supply chain and labor problems.

Mr. King said Tyson's staffing levels have improved. Its poultry plants are now fully staffed, the first time that has been the case for Tyson in two years, he said. Tyson in August [announced a Covid-19 vaccine mandate](#) for its approximately 120,000 U.S. workers, which he said led to about 96% of the company's employees being vaccinated as of this month.

Tyson is investing more in [robotic meat-processing systems](#), aiming to automate tasks such as deboning chickens and reduce worker turnover in plants, Mr. King said. Tyson is incorporating artificial intelligence to improve efficiency in its warehousing and transport operations, officials said.

HEADLINE	11/15 Outrage in China over brutal killing of dog
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-left-in-shock-following-brutal-killing-of-corgi-during-covid-19-disinfection-11636990026?mod=hp_featst_pos3
GIST	<p>HONG KONG—The fatal beating of a pet corgi by epidemic prevention workers disinfecting a residential building linked to a Covid-19 outbreak in southeastern China has sparked outrage in China, leading some pet owners and animal rights activists to question the extent of China’s stringent pandemic-control measures.</p> <p>On Friday, the corgi’s owner shared security footage showing her dog cowering behind a table as two people wearing hazmat suits walk toward it, with one brandishing an iron rod. As the two workers step past the dog’s cow-print bed, one of them hits the dog in the face with the rod as it tries to escape to the other room, after which it runs out of the frame.</p> <p>In a video interview with a local media outlet, the dog’s owner, identified only by her surname Fu, said she witnessed the beating through an app on her phone connected to her home security camera and used a speaker embedded in the camera to beg the workers to leave her dog alone, but her pleas were ignored.</p> <p>Ms. Fu said she heard the dog crying off camera and later saw the workers carrying a yellow bag away after the whimpers stopped. Blood could be seen on the ground afterward, she said.</p> <p>She didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>Corgi Chaofen’s owner shared security footage showing her dog cowering behind a table as a worker in a hazmat suit walked toward it. Image is a screen grab taken from a Weibo video posted online.</p> <p>Chinese social media erupted with commentary and outrage at the death of the dog. Some questioned how they could still trust the system.</p> <p>“A lot of people are compliant. They stop going out, wear masks every day, and even order takeout instead of going to restaurants,” read one post on the popular app WeChat. “Then they are quarantined through no fault of their own and their pets are killed—who can feel safe cooperating with the quarantine?”</p> <p>Ms. Fu, who lives in Shangrao, a midsize city in Jiangxi province, said in a post on the Twitter-like microblogging platform Weibo, that she had named the corgi Chaofen, after a famous regional fried noodle dish. She also wrote that she had tested negative for the virus at the time of the incident.</p> <p>The next day, district officials in Shangrao released a statement saying that workers carried out “biosafety disposal” procedures in the house “amid imperfect communication” with Ms. Fu. There is no indication the dog was tested for Covid-19 before it was killed.</p> <p>The attack on the corgi comes as China continues its weekslong battle against a new coronavirus outbreak that has spread to multiple provinces. Across the country, thousands of people have been sent to centralized quarantine as contact-tracing work continues. China has adhered to a zero-tolerance policy for Covid-19 and has implemented stringent lockdowns to stamp out any trace of the virus.</p> <p>State broadcaster China Central Television waded into the debate on Monday. In a lengthy opinion piece titled “Quarantined Pet Dog Savagely Killed,” shared on Weibo, CCTV said there was no absolute need to euthanize animals when confronting Covid-19, citing practices in Beijing and Shanghai, which generally allow for pets of people sent to quarantine to accompany them or be cared for separately.</p> <p>“Don’t treat other people’s pets like animals,” read the CCTV post. “To a certain extent, the way a society treats animals reflects its degree of civilization.”</p> <p>Pet dogs, especially expensive breeds such as corgis, have grown in popularity as status symbols and companions among China’s middle class and wealthy urbanites. Last April, China’s Ministry of</p>

Agriculture and Rural Affairs proposed that dogs in the country should be reclassified as “companion animals” instead of “livestock.”

The ministry proposed the change in light of “the public’s attention and love for animal protection.”

Ms. Fu said in a Weibo post, which has since disappeared, that she was ordered to enter quarantine just after midnight on Friday morning after a case of Covid-19 was discovered at Golden Phoenix Garden, the housing complex in Shangrao where she lived with her corgi. She said in her interview with local media that she asked for multiple assurances that disinfection staff would leave her dog alone if she left it at home.

Yet, later in the day at around 4:40 p.m., she witnessed Chaofen being attacked on her security camera app. She said the workers told her they had to do as they were told.

“I already did everything they asked me to,” Mrs. Fu said in the interview. “I have no idea what happened to him.”

There have been reports of other pet animals being euthanized throughout the pandemic, though some cities are more accommodating. In Beijing, there are special isolation points for pets, while in Shanghai some residents that were sent to quarantine were seen carrying their pet dogs with them.

Still, after the corgi attack, pet owners cautioned each other to take extra care to avoid contagion to protect their dogs and cats. Some warned not to trust epidemic prevention staff who say they won’t kill cats and dogs.

“If the same thing happens to me, don’t touch my pet unless you step over my dead body,” read one post on WeChat, reflecting a common sentiment. “My wife told me to pay attention to protection and not to get infected, or all three animals in the family would suffer.”

Pets have been ensnared in Covid-19 prevention measures across the world, with territories varying widely in how they handle the issue.

In Vietnam, people organized a petition after a dozen dogs were slaughtered when their owners tested positive for Covid-19. In Hong Kong, which found the first dog—a Pomeranian—to be infected with the coronavirus last March, [dogs are sent to a government facility for quarantine](#).

In its public statements announcing such cases, Hong Kong’s Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department said in February—when announcing a positive test on a poodle—that there was no evidence to show pets played a role in spreading Covid-19 among humans and urged owners not to abandon them.

Hu Xijin, editor in chief of nationalistic Chinese tabloid Global Times, weighed in after the incident, explaining that he could understand the outcry, but at the same time it was important to continue Covid-19 prevention measures.

“In my opinion, even from the perspective of crisis communication, this was certainly not a successful notice. It is not surprising to see it trigger controversies online,” Mr. Hu wrote. But “we should not expand the criticism to local epidemic prevention efforts as a whole, let alone regard this as the microcosm of the dynamic zero-case route across China.”

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HEADLINE	11/15 King Co. begins search for new sheriff
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3238794/king-county-begins-search-for-new-sheriff/
GIST	Executive Dow Constantine announced Monday that a nationwide search to pick King County’s next sheriff has officially begun.

Previously, King County's sheriff was an elected position decided by voters. A trio of charter amendments approved during 2020's election changed that, giving the County Executive the authority to appoint the role.

The other amendments made it so that the Office of Law Enforcement Oversight could subpoena witnesses and evidence to investigate misconduct, while giving the county council authority to specify the duties of the sheriff.

At the time, incumbent Sheriff Mitzi Johanknecht had claimed the amendments would functionally "dismantle" her office, although others — including County Councilmember Girmay Zahilay — argued that they were crucial to creating a culture of accountability.

Johanknecht's term is set to expire at the end of 2021. Starting on Jan. 1, 2022, Executive Constantine will then appoint an interim sheriff to head up the department while a national search for a full-time candidate takes place.

"We have an opportunity to rethink community safety — including policing — in King County, and we intend to seize this moment to create positive change," Constantine said in a news release. "We will conduct an extensive search and interview process to guarantee that the voices of our many communities are heard and reflected in the next sheriff."

The open position was posted on Monday, and "will be shared nationally through various organizations and recruiting forums." The county has also tagged [leadership firm POLIHIRE](#) to head up the recruitment process, which is expected to wrap up by the summer of 2022.

Once a candidate is chosen by Constantine, they will be subject to a confirmation vote from the county council.

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HEADLINE	11/15 EPA finalizes national recycling strategy
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-solutions/2021/11/15/epa-national-recycling-strategy-plastics/
GIST	<p>On Monday, the Environmental Protection Agency finalized America's first "national recycling strategy," which aims to support the agency's goal of achieving a 50 percent recycling rate by the end of the decade.</p> <p>"Our nation's recycling system is in need of critical improvements to better serve the American people," EPA Administrator Michael Regan said in a statement. "Together with the historic investments in recycling from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal, the strategy will help transform recycling and solid waste management across the country while creating jobs and bolstering our economy."</p> <p>The move comes on National Recycling Day, and the same day President Biden is signing an infrastructure bill that included \$350 million for solid waste and recycling grants. It also comes amid growing concerns about global plastics pollution.</p> <p>The vast majority of plastics are made from fossil fuels, and some can take hundreds of years to decompose. According to the United Nations Environment Program, the world produces about 300 million tons of plastic waste annually. A recent study found that the coronavirus pandemic led to more than 8 million tons of excess plastic waste.</p> <p>The new strategy includes five main objectives — including improving the collection of recyclables and recycling data and reducing contamination in the recycling stream. The EPA also takes a "circular economy" approach, in which a product is sustainably managed throughout its life cycle, from production to disposal or reuse.</p> <p>The new plan places a priority on addressing the impacts of recycling on poor and minority communities, such as incinerators and scrapyards.</p>

While the new initiative does not provide extensive policy details, it identifies a number of studies the EPA will conduct — including an assessment of the needs in the recycling infrastructure system and an analysis of policies that could make recycling easier. It also commits the EPA to creating a new goal for reducing the climate impacts of the production, consumption and disposal of waste items; a system that is a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions.

In a statement, the American Chemistry Council trade association welcomed the new strategy. “We look forward to working closely with EPA and Congress to accelerate the expansion and modernization of U.S. recycling,” said Joshua Baca, the organization’s vice president of plastics.

“In our efforts to combat the existential threat of climate change, recycling is an important tool to move us toward a more circular economy and truly sustainable future,” Sen. Thomas R. Carper (D-Del.), co-chair of the [Senate Recycling Caucus](#), said in a statement. “I’m glad that the Biden administration is taking steps to seize this opportunity by launching the EPA’s first-ever national recycling strategy.”

But achieving the goal of recycling 50 percent of municipal solid waste by 2030 will be a steep climb.

According to a 2020 [Government Accountability Office \(GAO\) report](#), less than a quarter of waste generated in the United States is collected for recycling. And [the EPA estimates](#) that in 2018, the plastic recycling rate was only about 9 percent.

The GAO has been recommending federal recycling reforms [since at least 2006](#), when the EPA was aiming for a 35 percent recycling rate by 2008. That target wasn’t met. But the issue took on more urgency in 2018 when the Chinese government limited recycling imports into the country, which had been a primary end point for much of the world’s recyclables and waste — including from the United States.

The change upended the global recycling system and, in 2019, Congress mandated the EPA to develop a national recycling strategy. That year, the agency released a [national recycling framework](#), and last fall, it put out a [draft of the strategy](#).

“We’re really building on past efforts around recycling,” said Carleton Waterhouse, deputy assistant administrator of the EPA’s Office of Land and Emergency Management. “We are focusing it around our administration’s priorities.”

However, some say the final version, released Monday, remains lacking in key areas.

“There needs to be a more robust commitment to waste reduction,” said Judith Enck, a former senior EPA official during the Obama administration who now heads the Beyond Plastics advocacy organization. “The problem is that there’s just too much plastic packaging foisted on American consumers.”

Center for International Environmental Law President Carroll Muffett agreed, saying that even if the United States moves toward higher recycling rates, it won’t matter if consumption isn’t curbed.

“We’re racing a moving target,” he said. “Recycling is not really the solution to the plastics crisis. Until we have national policies that are actually addressing the expansion of single-use disposable plastics that are driving that crisis, I think it’s likely to continue to mask the true source of the problem.”

Dating back [decades](#), the plastics industry has indeed used the possibility of recycling to keep its products on the market. For instance, a 1989 account from the industry-supported Council for Solid Waste Solutions noted of its efforts in Iowa that “outright bans on polystyrene packaging were dropped with a promise of recycling by industry.”

Muffett also noted that it matters what type of recycling the EPA includes in its national strategy. The agency mentions a much-debated technique called chemical recycling — or advanced recycling — which

	<p>uses heat or chemicals to convert plastics into either fuel or plastic resin for reuse in manufacturing new products.</p> <p>“Today’s versatile advanced recycling technologies can convert post-use plastics into a range of useful outputs,” reads a pamphlet on the process from the American Chemistry Council, a trade association. “These technologies also offer important environmental benefits, such as diverting valuable materials from landfill, transforming waste into an abundant source of alternative energy, and helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”</p> <p>Critics, however, see the framing as misleading.</p> <p>“Chemical recycling is being held up by the industry as a cure-all,” said Neil Tangri, science and policy director for the advocacy organization Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives. But, he said, the technology often doesn’t work if the recycling stream is dirty. It can be energy-intensive and doesn’t necessarily result in high enough quality plastic resin for repurposing, he added.</p> <p>“You’re calling it recycling,” said Tangri, “but mostly you’re turning plastic into carbon dioxide and waste.”</p> <p>The October 2020 draft of the national recycling strategy did not include any mention of chemical or advanced recycling. But the final version states that “chemical recycling is part of the scope of this strategy and further discussion is welcome.”</p> <p>“Trump didn’t put it in, why would Biden?” Enck said. “That is an embarrassment to the Biden administration and should be removed from the plan.”</p> <p>Waterhouse said the agency included chemical recycling in response to comments the agency received about its draft, but did not represent an endorsement of it.</p> <p>“It’s really a matter of not taking it off the table,” he said. “We should be discussing it.”</p> <p>Overall, Waterhouse called Monday’s announcement a “valuable first step” that will involve further consultation and more detailed policies down the line to address plastics and food waste.</p> <p>Enck, however, said she remains skeptical that the EPA’s current blueprint can move the needle on the world’s waste problems.</p> <p>“I think it’s good they did the plan,” she said. “I just wish it was a better plan.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 DOH: 755,011 cases, 8990 deaths
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/coronavirus/article255846046.html
GIST	<p>The Washington state Department of Health reported 1,522 new COVID-19 cases Monday and 56 new deaths since Friday.</p> <p>As of Monday, statewide totals from the illness caused by the coronavirus are 755,011 and 8,990 deaths. The case total includes 85,290 infections listed as probable. Death data is considered complete only through Oct. 29. DOH revises previous case and death counts daily.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Cuba quashes nationwide protest, dissent
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/15/world/americas/cuba-protests.html
GIST	Demonstrators largely stayed off the streets of Cuba on Monday during what had been a highly anticipated nationwide march, with the police, state security agents and even civilians fanning across the country to prevent dissidents from leaving their houses.

The show of force demonstrated the vast security apparatus at the government's disposal in quashing dissent. It also underscored the challenges the opposition faces in Cuba, where fear of a crackdown often overpowers activism.

For months ahead of the planned demonstration, government critics had sought to reignite the popular discontent that erupted into protests over the summer. But uniformed police officers, plainclothes state security agents and government supporters holding picket signs surrounded the homes of dissidents, human rights activists said.

"My house has been under siege for three days," Manuel Guerra, a doctor in Holguín, in eastern Cuba, said in a text message. "Cuba is in mourning."

In a highly unusual move, Cuban activists had announced plans for a "Civic March for Change," a nationwide rally set for Monday afternoon to protest the lack of freedom under a Communist Party that has ruled the island for more than six decades.

The organizers, many of them young artists, had hoped to ride on the momentum of the marches in July in which thousands of Cubans demanded food, medicine and liberty. In recent days, fearing violence, they toned down their plans.

On Sunday, a leader of the movement, Yunior García Aguilera, had planned to march alone holding a white rose, but government supporters prevented him from leaving his house, videos posted on Facebook show. At one point, he peeked through the blinds of his apartment window with a white flower in his hand — until someone on a higher floor lowered a huge Cuban flag, blocking the view.

"This community is not going to allow a media show," one of Mr. García's neighbors shouted in his face, according to a video posted on Facebook.

For weeks, the government had been denouncing Mr. García in the state-run news media, dimming the prospects of others joining the protests, according to María Antonieta Colunga Olivera, a journalist. "They have torn him to pieces on Cuban national television, and they have discredited him in every possible way," she said.

Ms. Colunga, too, has come under government scrutiny. She said a police car was stationed outside her home in Havana all day Sunday, a practice the government has increasingly used as an intimidation tactic. A state security agent visited on Monday, she said.

On Monday, dissidents shared videos and photographs of police officers and government supporters surrounding their homes. A few filmed themselves taking to the streets dressed in white as an act of protest. At least 40 people were arrested, according to Cynthia de la Cantera, a Cuban journalist who was helping two social justice organizations keep track.

In Santa Clara, Saily González, an activist, posted a video of herself hanging white sheets outside her house as a symbol of freedom, as people who support the Cuban revolution shouted her down with insults, in what is known in Cuba as an "act of repudiation."

Alexander Figueredo Izaguirre, a doctor in Bayamo, said security officials had been in his neighborhood since Sunday. Photographs taken that day showed an empty street with two police and military vehicles parked on the corner.

"Here in Bayamo, they have everything militarized," Dr. Figueredo said.

The Cuban government declared the protest illegal, and the state-run news media has repeatedly characterized the dissidents as puppets of Washington.

“Cuba has never allowed and will never allow actions of a foreign government in our territory trying to destabilize the country,” Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez said last week.

State news media focused on the country’s positive developments: the return of in-person classes and the reopening of tourism. The protest, the government media said, was “destined to failure.”

“We are facing a manipulation of our reality,” the state newspaper Granma said.

The plans for the protest come during a year marked by severe food shortages and a health care system strained by the coronavirus pandemic. The number of Cubans fleeing to the United States has also been on a noticeable rise. By early November, only a month into the fiscal year, the U.S. Coast Guard had already recovered 248 Cubans at sea, compared with 49 for all of last year.

But the government made clear that it was in no mood for dissent.

Juan Pappier, a Cuba researcher at Human Rights Watch who has been closely following the protests, said anyone caught participating would have faced a year in prison, while anyone accused of throwing a rock — even without evidence — could be sentenced to 10 years, he said.

Hundreds of people are still in jail from the protests that erupted in July.

“I think there’s a strategy of total suppression — not even repression,” Mr. Pappier said.

Yoani Sánchez, a blogger and activist, said the show of force illustrated how frightened the Cuban government was of people demanding freedom of expression. But she questioned whether the government could continue to dedicate extensive resources on street corners across the country.

“Fear changed sides,” Ms. Sánchez said during her morning podcast. “How? Cuban officials have deployed an intense campaign of threats, surveillance and cuts to the internet that demonstrate only one thing, ladies and gentlemen: the terror, the panic, they have of losing power.”

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HEADLINE	11/15 California possibility of winter surge
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/15/us/california-winter-coronavirus-surge.html
GIST	<p>As you probably remember, the winter coronavirus surge in California last year was nothing short of catastrophic.</p> <p>Emergency rooms were so full that ambulances often had nowhere to drop off patients desperate for treatment. Hospitals needed refrigerated trucks to manage the overflow of bodies in their morgues. In less than three months, California’s death toll from Covid-19 more than doubled.</p> <p>So, with our second pandemic winter nearly upon us, will disaster strike again?</p> <p>Coronavirus cases in California have been ticking up since late October. The state is preparing for the possibility of a winter surge — what Gov. Gavin Newsom last week called his “biggest anxiety.”</p> <p>But unlike last year, 76 percent of Californians have gotten at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine. That means that while the holiday season may again lead to more transmission of the virus, the consequences will be less ruinous, experts say.</p> <p>“I don’t think we’ll have the same huge peak we had last winter, but I do think we will see another peak,” Dr. Timothy Brewer, an infectious-disease expert at the University of California, Los Angeles, told me. “And the big difference will be because of the large number of people vaccinated.”</p> <p>Why numbers will keep climbing</p>

Getting your Covid-19 shots remains the best way to protect against serious illness. And as of last week, [all Californians can now receive booster doses](#) to enhance immunity.

But the fact remains that some 9.5 million Californians are totally unvaccinated against the coronavirus. And that's where things get tricky.

Even in a place like San Francisco, which has one of the highest vaccination rates in the state, tens of thousands of people — roughly a quarter of the city's population — aren't fully vaccinated, according to [a New York Times vaccination tracker](#). And some residents who have gotten their shots may have [had their immunity wane in recent months](#).

"From an individual perspective, I feel really safe," said Dr. Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo, an epidemiologist at the University of California, San Francisco, who added that she and her family had gotten their boosters. "But I don't feel like the city where I live, the state where I live, will be out of the woods. That I don't feel confident about."

Bibbins-Domingo and others worry that hospitals could still be overloaded, mostly by unvaccinated individuals, as the virus takes off this winter. Unvaccinated Californians are nearly [10 times more likely to be hospitalized with Covid-19](#) as those who are fully immunized.

The next few months concern epidemiologists because the coronavirus appears to follow a seasonal pattern — similar to how the flu proliferates in the winter — that causes a peak in California in the summer and a bigger one around the end of the year.

Plus, the arrival of chillier weather pushes people to socialize indoors, where it's easier for the virus to spread. And during the Thanksgiving and winter holidays, families and friends from multiple households tend to congregate, further increasing the chances of coronavirus transmission.

These conditions could mean that regions with large numbers of unvaccinated people, such as the Central Valley and far Northern California, could see disastrous overflows in their hospitals, experts say. (Already, these regions have the highest level of transmission in the state.)

Adjusting to living with the coronavirus

Still, even if California logs as many new coronavirus cases as it did last winter (which seems unlikely), the death toll won't approach the same heights because so many people have protection conferred by the vaccines.

In recent days, [some experts have been calling for California to focus on hospitalizations](#) instead of case numbers, since most people who become infected won't also become seriously ill.

Brewer, the U.C.L.A. physician, recommended that vaccinated Californians think about holiday precautions differently than they did last year, when officials asked everyone to stay home.

He instead suggested figuring out what Covid-19 precautions can make your gatherings safer. The most important thing, he said, is to make sure that everyone you spend time with is vaccinated. Then perhaps consider avoiding parties with hundreds of people.

"I think what people need to realize is that this virus is not going away," Brewer told me. "So going into the holidays, people need to recognize that the coronavirus will be out there. There will be transmission. There will be cases, and the question just is: What is your comfort level in terms of trying to go on with your life?"

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HEADLINE	11/15 Inside the \$1 trillion infrastructure bill
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/15/us/politics/whats-in-the-infrastructure-bill.html

GIST	<p>Federal and state officials have identified priority projects that have been put off for years and may now move ahead as a result of the \$1 trillion infrastructure bill that President Biden signed into law on Monday, such as repairing hundreds of aging bridges and building dozens of new or extended rail lines.</p> <p>The bill also funds a number of other broad initiatives such as expanding broadband internet in rural corners of the country and cleaning up heavily polluted Superfund sites. In total, the measure contains \$550 billion in new funds to be spread around different areas of need. Here are some of the areas covered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$73 billion for the electricity grid. Upgrades to the country's power systems that, among other things, will help the grid carry renewable energy. • \$66 billion for rail. A significant investment in Amtrak, which has a major maintenance backlog, as well as funding for new rail lines and upgrades to existing ones. • \$65 billion for broadband. Funding to provide high-speed internet access to hard-to-reach populations, including Native American communities. • \$47 billion for climate resiliency. New funding aimed at combating wildfires and preparing coastal regions for more frequent hurricanes and flooding. • \$21 billion for environmental projects. Increased funds for cleaning up abandoned mines, contaminated waterways and other polluted sites overseen by the Environmental Protection Agency. • \$15 billion for removing lead service lines. Modernizing water systems to address contaminated drinking water that has affected multiple large population centers. • \$7.5 billion for electric vehicles. Increasing the availability of charging stations across the country, which is part of Mr. Biden's pledge to build 500,000 stations nationwide. • \$2 billion for underserved rural areas. A grant program aimed at expanding transportation projects in rural areas.
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HEADLINE	11/15 Despite efforts, cargo ship backup grows
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/15/cargo-ship-backup-worsens-after-biden-attempts-unt/
GIST	<p>The throng of container ships anchored off the coast of Southern California grew by 43% since President Biden's announcement a month ago that the ports there would start working around the clock and ease supply chain woes.</p> <p>A record 83 cargo ships sat off the coast Friday awaiting offload at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, according to data from the Marine Exchange of Southern California. That's 25 more than the 58 container ships in the backup than when Mr. Biden made his announcement in mid-October.</p> <p>When making the announcement, he said the longer hours at the ports would help keep the store shelves stocked for holiday shopping.</p> <p>"Today we have some good news: We're going to help speed up the delivery of goods all across America," he said when announcing 24-hour port operations on Oct. 13. He also said the ports were just part of the supply chain problem but vowed to make progress sooner rather than later.</p> <p>The White House did not respond to questions about the lack of progress at the ports.</p> <p>Mr. Biden on Monday signed into law a \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure program that includes extensive upgrades to America's highways, bridges, public transportation and ports.</p> <p>He has promised the port projects will alleviate the supply chain hangups, though new construction and dredging are expected to take years to complete.</p>

“My message to the American people is this: America is moving again and your life is going to change for the better,” Mr. Biden said at the signing ceremony.

Meanwhile, snag in moving products across the country puts the pinch on farmers, automakers, retailers and ultimately consumers.

Port officials say the expanded working hours help and they are on track to move a record volume of goods in 2021. They blame the persistent backlog on kinks upstream in the supply chain.

Marine Exchange’s Executive Director J. Kipling Louttit said September through November is always busy the months for the ports, which receive 40% of the nation’s containerized imports, as stores stock up for the holidays, but this year’s backup is unprecedented.

“If you go back a year, the normal number of container ships at anchor pre-COVID is zero to one,” Mr. Louttit said.

The American Trucking Associations estimated last month that the industry is short a record of 80,000 drivers. And despite the ports working more hours, most warehouses have not expanded their hours to receive the goods.

“The cargo has nowhere to go,” Port of Los Angeles Executive Director Gene Seroka told CBS’ “60 Minutes” in an interview that aired Sunday. “We’ve gotta get a workforce in the warehouses and the trucking industry that are complementary to all this cargo that is — that’s coming in right now.”

More than 76,000 containers have piled up onshore at the Port of Los Angeles, threatening to grind operations to a halt as the ports run out of space. More than 25% of the containers have been onshore at the port for 13 days or longer.

To address the buildup of containers, the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach announced a plan to begin charging a fee on containers that dwell for more than six days. The fines, however, potentially add to the already skyrocketing costs to bring in products from overseas.

The fee was scheduled to go into effect Monday, but the ports announced at the last minute that they had “postponed consideration” of the penalty for an additional week.

Last week, the White House’s task force said that the fee threat was beginning to have an impact. They said the number of containers remaining on the docks nine days or more had fallen by more than 20%.

Business leaders worry that their supply chain headaches aren’t going away anytime soon.

“I expect this to continue into 2022, for the entire 2022,” Luca Zaramella, the chief financial officer of Chicago-based Mondelez International, told Yahoo Finance. “I think the holiday season ahead of us will put even more strains on global supply chains.”

Mr. Luca said the bottlenecks in the supply chains could drive further inflation globally.

“I think that we might see some things changing maybe into 2023, but quite honestly 2022, I believe is going to be a tough situation for global supply chains,” he said.

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HEADLINE	11/15 China, Russia disinformation undermine US
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/15/china-russia-used-pandemic-disinformation-undermin/

China and Russia spread disinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic in a bid to undermine the United States and support Chinese and Russian narratives around the world, according to a report by the RAND Corp. made public Monday.

The report by the defense think tank stated that the disinformation has contributed to deep disagreements on “established truth,” or what the authors call “truth decay” – the shift away from public discourse over facts and analysis.

“Truth Decay is a serious threat to both domestic U.S. and international security, one that is being exacerbated by malign efforts from a variety of national bad actors,” the report states.

‘We are your base’: Activists warn Democrats of election losses without full amnesty in budget
The report also concluded, “much of the disinformation on social media is spread by a relatively small number of malign users.”

“Russian and Chinese English-language news appear to be manipulated to promote certain narratives, particularly ones that promote Russian and Chinese geopolitical interests at the expense of the United States,” the report says. “They also appear to promote a variety of different conspiracy theories, especially those that portray the pandemic as an opportunity for governments and elites to take advantage of citizens and those that cast doubt on the origin of COVID-19. This represents serious misconduct on the part of Russia’s and China’s governments.”

The report calls for creating a high-technology system of detecting anti-U.S. disinformation from hostile states. The system could expose foreign government efforts to influence the news landscape and make their efforts more visible.

The authors are RAND experts Christian Johnson and William Marcellino. Mr. Johnson is a physicist who specializes in applying quantitative scientific techniques such as machine learning and artificial intelligence to public policy problems. Mr. Marcellino is a behavioral scientist and retired Marine who specializes in text analytics and information as a warfighting function.

Disinformation is defined as the deliberate spreading of false or misleading information to achieve political or economic objectives. Other elements of the threat include misinformation, or the unintentional spreading of false information, and fake news, defined as news reporting based intentionally on falsehoods.

State-linked news agencies in China and Russia promoted conspiracy theories about the pandemic and public health measures used in fighting it.

“Examples of news in this pillar are the suggestion that COVID-19 is a bioweapon or otherwise engineered in a laboratory, or the idea that contact-tracing efforts are part of an effort by government and technology companies to track citizens,” the report said.

The disinformation promoted by China and Russia involved anti-U.S. conspiracy theories about the virus, while Chinese information operations sought to advance pro-China news while “laundering” Beijing’s mishandling of the outbreak and stonewalling on the origins of the virus in Wuhan, China.

Early in the pandemic, Russian media reinforced Chinese state media efforts to distort the facts about China’s handling of the pandemic.

China’s government silenced doctors who tried to sound the alarm on the disease outbreak in Wuhan after the first cases appeared in December 2019. China also failed to share virus samples with international medical experts and falsely told the World Health Organization at first that the virus was not spread among humans.

The Chinese government also failed to limit international travel from Wuhan during the Lunar New Year celebrations, increasing the global spread of the virus.

	<p>The report was based on a scientific analysis of 43 news sources, including nine Russian and five Chinese propaganda outlets. The remaining sources were U.S. and British news outlets.</p> <p>The study then applied an analytical process called Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), which identifies topics and words, and clusters of words in a group of 247,315 news articles published between Jan. 1, 2020, and Aug. 31, 2020, the main months of the pandemic.</p> <p>The analysis produced four disinformation topics promoted by China and Russia.</p> <p>They included Russia’s promotion of conspiracy theories designed to fuel fears of U.S. government authoritarianism in responding to the pandemic, and China’s “reputation laundering” aimed at distracting readers from the fact the virus originated in China.</p> <p>“Spreading uncertainty about the origin of the virus that causes COVID-19 is performed via articles that dismiss the so-called ‘lab-leak theory’ and that promote research about a natural origin — or simply claim that there is no way of knowing the origin,” the report said.</p> <p>A declassified U.S. intelligence assessment made much the same conclusion in a report made public last month.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Indigenous climate activists decry Cop26
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/16/indigenous-climate-activists-cop26-endangers-native-communities
GIST	<p>Indigenous communities facing an upsurge in land grabs, water shortages and human rights violations as a result of the Cop26 deal have accused world leaders of sacrificing them in order to postpone meaningful climate action and shield corporate profits.</p> <p>The Glasgow deal creates a regulated global carbon trading market – a move widely supported by the world’s biggest polluters including the US – allowing countries to partially meet their climate targets by buying credits representing emission cuts by others.</p> <p>Critics warn that carbon markets incentivize countries and corporations to offset – rather than cut – emissions responsible for global heating by investing in so-called green energy projects like biofuel monocrops and hydroelectric dams, which are linked to environmental destruction, forced displacement, arbitrary arrests and even murder.</p> <p>In addition, such carbon credit schemes often rely on sequestering land, forests and rivers relied on by indigenous and local communities for food, water, medicine and spiritual traditions, and there is little evidence to suggest they lead to a genuine drop in emissions.</p> <p>In fact, global emissions have continued to skyrocket since carbon credits were first incentivized under the voluntary Kyoto protocol in 1997, as have abuses against indigenous and rural communities defending land rights and natural resources.</p> <p>Now, Indigenous communities fear what’s coming next as the scope and scale of the new global carbon market – introduced in article 6 of the Paris accords – is much wider. Far more countries and industries, including the US, Saudi Arabia and civil aviation, will participate.</p> <p>“Cop26 leaders signed an agreement that will entrench sacrificing Indigenous people ... [but] failed to include real solutions to meet the climate chaos that many of our frontline Indigenous communities are facing,” said Thomas Joseph from the Hoopa tribe, located in California. “The leaders pushing for market-based solutions and the commodification of our Mother Earth are signing a death sentence.”</p>

Andrea Xieu, a spokesperson for the Mexican collective Futuros Indígenas (Indigenous Futures) described the deal as an embarrassment that illustrated the murky influence of fossil fuel companies in Glasgow.

More than 500 fossil fuel lobbyists, affiliated with some of the world's biggest oil and gas companies, were granted access to Cop26 – a larger number than any single country delegation. Meanwhile, indigenous people were mostly excluded, and their traditional knowledge on sustainable land and water management sidelined.

“Indigenous nations were not part of the negotiations despite the fact that 80% of the planet's biodiversity survives in our territories. The problem is not only the blah, blah, blah of politicians, but the bang, bang, bang of greenwashing that will continue to destroy our lives and territories,” said Xieu.

At least 1,005 environmental and land rights defenders have been murdered since the Paris accords were signed six years ago, according to the international non-profit Global Witness. One in three of those killed were Indigenous people. The dead include Lenca leader Berta Cáceres, winner of the prestigious Goldman prize for environmental defenders, who was shot dead at her home in Honduras in March 2016 for opposing the construction of an internationally financed dam.

Carbon trading is one of the so-called nature-based solutions to the climate crisis heavily promoted by big polluters at Cop26 as the silver bullet to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 with little pain for people in the global north.

But critics say offsetting carbon is a false solution as it essentially allows polluters to keep polluting and thus net zero is not actually zero.

“Net zero is a scam. It is used as a smokescreen to avoid actual transition away from fossil fuels and carry on business as usual by relying on unproven carbon capture technologies and offsets,” said Sebastien Duyck, senior attorney from the Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL) and an official observer.

At the last minute, activists helped secure a handful of new safeguards for article 6 such as an independent grievance mechanism. But according to Duyck, carbon markets remain counterproductive and fundamentally harmful. Investors will still be able to qualify for incentives without complying with international treaties that require indigenous people to be properly consulted.

“Article 6 creates a way for public and private investors to weaponize the Paris agreement for the sake of profits at the cost of local communities and indigenous people's rights,” added Duyck.

Another nature-based solution popular with polluters is the creation of carbon sinks through massive reforestation and afforestation programs.

While not part of the official Cop26 deal, according to some calculations countries collectively pledged to plant enough trees to cover a landmass the size of Australia. However, that threatens livelihoods, food security and sacred traditions of indigenous communities and small scale farmers who use much of the land being earmarked for tree planting.

“Nature-based solutions sound nice, but they won't solve the climate crisis even if you're willing to sacrifice indigenous people and local communities,” said Sophie Grig from Survival International. “Net zero is disingenuous and a diversion from doing what needs to be done now: stop burning fossil fuels and protect indigenous land rights.”

Also gaining traction is the UN's 30 by 30 initiative – a plan to conserve 30% of the planet's land and seas by 2030 through conservation measures like doubling protected nature reserves, which Joe Biden has promised to implement as part of his climate strategy.

	<p>Speaking in Glasgow last week, Tom Goldtooth, executive director of the Indigenous Environmental Network, said 30 by 30 would be the biggest planet grab in history, leading to millions of people being displaced.</p> <p>Another big worry for indigenous communities is Cop26's failure to help those on the frontline recover, rebuild and adapt to global heating.</p> <p>Rich polluting countries succeeded in obstructing the creation of a loss and damage fund to compensate communities who have already lost their homes and livelihoods from floods, droughts, heatwaves and rising sea levels. After almost 15 years of discussion and delays on loss and damage, the Glasgow deal mandates further dialogue.</p> <p>"The results of this Cop are not a surprise, but they represent the state of the governments and their feelings, which are completely at odds with wider civil society demanding concrete actions and urgent measures," said Calfin Lafkenche, a Mapuche organiser with the Minga movement, an indigenous solidarity network.</p> <p>In response to the acts and omissions at Cop26, the women of the Kichwa Indigenous People of Sarayaku, located in Ecuador, declared a state of emergency, citing the summit's failure to address the existential threats posed to them by fossil fuel companies and the climate crisis.</p> <p>In a statement, the women said: "Indigenous peoples resist the extraction of natural resources with our bodies, with our lives. Our contribution to tackling climate change must be recognized. Our solutions must be heard."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Pacific delegates condemn Cop26 failure
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/15/cop26-pacific-delegates-condemn-monumental-failure-that-leaves-islands-in-peril
GIST	<p>Pacific representatives and negotiators have condemned the outcome of the Cop26 meeting as "watered down" and a "monumental failure" that puts Pacific nations in severe existential danger, with one saying that Australia's refusal to support funding for loss and damage suffered by Pacific countries was "a deep betrayal" of the region.</p> <p>Some Pacific leaders expressed qualified optimism about the result of the critical climate summit, such as the Fijian prime minister, Frank Bainimarama, who tweeted: "The 1.5-degree target leaves Glasgow battered, bruised, but alive."</p> <p>But many other Pacific experts and climate negotiators were disheartened by the result.</p> <p>"1.5 is barely alive," said Auimatagi Joe Moeono-Kolio, a Pacific senior political adviser to the Fossil Fuels Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative.</p> <p>"The first draft of an otherwise very unambitious text had one notable bright spot in it – the phase-out of coal. This was further watered down. For a planet in crisis, this represents a monumental failure in recognising the clear and imminent danger entire countries are now in, including my own.</p> <p>"For all the hoopla and greenwashing since yesterday, the fundamental fact remains: we are still headed for a two-degree-plus world," he said.</p> <p>For Samoan negotiator Galumalemana Anne Rasmussen, who is the representative of Small Island Developing States (Sids) to the Cop bureau, the Pacific can only do so much.</p>

“The Alliance of Small Island States and Pacific Sids really pushed hard, everyone engaged, but unfortunately it is always up to the developed and rich to determine the fate and direction of these pledges and outcomes.”

A regional oceans and climate expert from [Tonga](#), Taholo Kami, agreed: “I think we may be finding leadership at subnational and national level, private sector and even consumer and community level offer more hope at this time than the lethargic Cop process where we are forced to celebrate painful and minimal shifts with text and leave not knowing if this will result in meaningful outcomes.”

In particular, Pacific leaders were disappointed by the softened language on “phasing down” rather than “phasing out” coal, and also the lack of strong commitment for funding to pay for loss and damages suffered by Pacific nations due to the climate crisis.

“Cop26 also failed to adequately recognise our present reality – we are facing the impacts of climate change right now,” said Auimatagi, who has worked with Pacific governments under the process of the UN framework convention on climate change. “Yet despite their historical responsibility for our current plight, developed nations like the US, UK and Australia refused to support a funding facility for loss and damage which, in Australia’s case, presents a deep betrayal and abdication of its responsibilities to its Pacific neighbours.”

Hilda Heine, the former president of the [Marshall Islands](#), who has been a key figure in climate negotiations in previous years, tweeted she was “disappointed EU and US [High Ambition Coalition] members did not rally behind funding facility to support the vulnerable respond to loss and damages caused by industrialised world’s addiction to [fossil fuels] and coal”.

Despite travel restrictions, costs and risk to health, [Pacific islands sent negotiations teams to Cop26](#) in the hopes of influencing outcomes and ensuring that Pacific concerns were heard.

The minister for finance of [Tuvalu](#), one of the atoll nations considered most at risk of disappearing due to sea level rise, gave an emotive speech to the summit in which he spoke of the impact of the climate crisis on his country.

“It is not fiction, it is not projected to happen in the future – our land is fast disappearing. Tuvalu is literally sinking. We must take action now.”

But even the presence of Pacific negotiators could not influence the outcomes of the Glasgow summit, which as it stands – even if conditional and unconditional nationally determined contributions for the near-term target of 2030 were met – projected that warming might still spell the end for some Pacific atoll nations.

“Going forward, it’s time we look at not only drastically reducing our fossil fuels consumption, but begin taking serious steps ahead of Cop27 to stop fossil fuel production altogether and begin a just transition before it is too late,” Auimatagi said. “Only then can we have a real shot of keeping 1.5 alive and ensuring our islands – and our planet – survives.”

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HEADLINE	11/15 China: developed countries cut coal
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/15/china-urges-developed-countries-to-take-the-lead-in-cutting-out-coal
GIST	As Cop26 drew to a close over the weekend, Chinese media highlighted Beijing’s contribution over the last fortnight in Glasgow. “The Chinese delegation took a constructive attitude, actively communicated and negotiated with all parties,” said CCTV’s main evening news bulletin on Sunday. “[It] provided China’s wisdom and China’s solution ...”

But when [China](#) and India chose the last few hours of negotiations to push for the language on coal to be diluted from “phase out” to “phase down”, both countries came under nearly immediate fire from commentators. Cop president Alok Sharma later urged both countries to “explain themselves and what they did to the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world”.

On Monday Beijing kicked the ball back to developed nations. Zhao Lijian, a spokesperson at China’s foreign ministry, said that before asking all countries to stop using coal, developed countries should remember how far many developing countries need to travel in order to find sustainable ways to provide electricity for their citizens. “We encourage developed countries to take the lead in stopping using coal while providing ample funding, technological and capacity-building support for developing countries’ energy transition. We need concrete actions more than slogans.”

Developed countries have not yet delivered on all their promises, he pointed out in answer to a question from the Communist party mouthpiece, the People’s Daily, at Monday’s regular press briefing. “There were regrets and deficiencies at the session, and the global response to climate change still faces many challenges.”

The framing of the negotiations as developing versus developed nations was clearly aimed at China’s domestic audience, analysts say. During the first week of Cop26, as international media criticised Xi for not turning up in person, a decade-old video clip of the Chinese representative, Xie Zhenhua, resurfaced and went viral on Chinese social media.

In it, an angry Xie criticised developed countries for putting too much pressure on developing nations in a string of parallel sentences. “We need to develop, we need to eradicate poverty, we need to protect the environment. We have done everything we could. We have also done things you have not done. What qualifications do you have to teach me here?”

Xie’s past fury prompted social media users last week to start a hashtag with a line from Xie: #sloganscannotreplaceactions. On Weibo [this hashtag](#) has been viewed more than 1.3m times.

China and India ‘side by side’

The Chinese [media](#) are now wondering if Beijing’s solidarity with Delhi on climate would improve the strained bilateral relationship, following territorial disputes in the last year, prompting [a statement](#) by India’s chief of defence staff, Bipin Rawat, that China is the biggest security threat facing his country.

But on Sunday, Chinese state media praised China’s solidarity with India. The state-owned Global Times claimed in a piece that China and India “stood side by side together” at a critical time. “As the two biggest developing countries, China and India face similar situations, similar stances and similar demands,” it wrote.

But it’s not all power play in Beijing’s view of Cop26. Surveys from recent years have consistently shown that the Chinese public has been more aware of the climate emergency and the main source of it – a message that state news agency Xinhua also echoed, saying that “the dominant source of carbon dioxide emissions is the process of electricity generation”. And Beijing has certainly promoted tackling the climate emergency as a part of President Xi Jinping’s catchphrase of a “shared future for mankind”.

On China’s social media, one hashtag, #Cop26, had been viewed more than 120m times during the conference period. Another related hashtag, #COP26 ongoing, had been viewed for at least 110m times, suggesting a high level of interest in the Glasgow conference within China.

“The deep decarbonisation required by climate science needs the full support of the public. This is the case for all the major emitters. China is not an exception,” said Li Shuo, a Beijing-based policy adviser at Greenpeace East Asia. “Public opinion has advanced China’s environmental agenda.

“But the climate crisis demands more. The gap between Chinese public perception and what needs to be done to keep [a reduction of] 1.5C alive will determine the speed of China’s decarbonisation,” he said.

HEADLINE	11/15 EU agrees: new sanctions on Belarus
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/15/eu-agrees-new-sanctions-against-belarus-over-border-crisis
GIST	<p>The EU has agreed on new sanctions against Belarus targeting “everyone involved” in facilitating the transport of people to Belarus’s border with Poland, where thousands are stuck in makeshift camps in freezing weather.</p> <p>The EU accuses Alexander Lukashenko’s regime of waging a “hybrid attack” against the bloc by allowing people from the Middle East who are desperate to reach the EU to fly into Minsk then head for the Polish border.</p> <p>Josep Borrell, the EU foreign policy chief, said the decision by 27 EU foreign ministers reflected “the determination by the European Union to stand up to the instrumentalisation of migrants for political purposes”.</p> <p>A list of people and entities to be hit by asset freezes and travel bans is expected to be finalised in the coming weeks. It will include “people, airlines, travel agencies and everyone involved in this illegal push of migrants against our borders”, Borrell said.</p> <p>Lukashenko has vowed to retaliate. “They’re scaring us with sanctions,” he told officials on Monday. “We will defend ourselves. We can not retreat.” He did not announce specific measures.</p> <p>Lukashenko had previously threatened to cut gas supplies to Europe via a pipeline from Russia. A Kremlin spokesperson on Monday said Vladimir Putin had expressed “confidence that this won’t affect the transport of gas”.</p> <p>The EU decision was announced as a column of people converged on the Polish border for the second week running.</p> <p>Video footage showed people walking out of a forest where they were encamped and making for the Kuźnica border crossing. The group was accompanied by Belarusian police in riot gear. When they reached the border, they were met by Polish riot police standing behind razor wire fencing. The standoff has continued into the evening with Poland deploying reinforcements to the border area.</p> <p>The EU has already imposed four rounds of sanctions on the Belarusian authorities and senior officials over last year’s disputed election and the brutal crackdown on peaceful protesters that followed.</p> <p>EU officials want to ensure the new sanctions list is legally watertight, to minimise the risk of being sued in the European court of justice. “We are all pushing to have this done yesterday, but the reality is that yesterday will probably come in two weeks,” said one diplomat ahead of the meeting.</p> <p>Diplomats are also discussing tightening economic sanctions against Belarus by extending restrictions that already target the tobacco and potash industries – both vital sources of revenue for Lukashenko.</p> <p>“We are far from the end of the spiral of sanctions,” said Germany’s foreign minister, Heiko Maas. The Belarus flag carrier, Belavia, is among the airlines likely to be targeted and Maas called on other companies to follow the example of Turkish Airlines by restricting flights to Belarus’s capital.</p> <p>“Those that don’t must expect tough sanctions. The situation is so dramatic that I can no longer rule out the denial of overflight rights or landing permission in the European area,” he said.</p> <p>The sanctions list is thought unlikely to feature the Russian airline Aeroflot, although Poland and Lithuania have said they hold the Russian president responsible for the border crisis. “He [Putin] is driving this crisis together with Mr Lukashenko politically, that’s for certain,” Lithuania’s foreign minister, Gabrielius Landsbergis, told reporters.</p>

“Russia is using this crisis to destabilise the EU,” he added, describing migration as one of the most sensitive topics for the EU. “It’s an excellent weapon against us. And if we are unable to make a decision, then you can probably say ‘look, the EU is ineffective’ and that builds up new fires inside the EU.”

With reports of Russian troops massing near Russia’s border with Ukraine, Landsbergis suggested the Kremlin could be preparing an attack. “It is very likely that Ukraine could be attacked while we are dealing with the situation on the Polish, Lithuanian and Belarusian border,” he said. Belarus could also be attacked and Belarusian border guards replaced with Russian FSB agents, under a pretext of deeper cooperation between the two countries, Landsbergis claimed.

Landsbergis said Lithuania would be ready to help with any UN-organised repatriation of people to the Middle East, but ruled out return flights from his country.

An Iraqi official on Sunday announced that the country would organise its first repatriation flight for people trapped on the border between Belarus and Poland. The flight would leave on Thursday from Minsk.

The official did not say how many people the flight would transport to Iraq. According to an Iraqi government tally, 571 of its citizens have requested “voluntary” repatriation, the official said.

The number of Iraqis on the Belarus-Poland border is believed to be far higher. One Iraqi Kurdish official last week estimated that there were as many as 8,000 people from just that region at the border.

On Monday, Lukashenko said many of those camped out on the border with Poland would be unwilling to return to Iraq.

“We’re ready ... to put them on planes that will carry them back home,” said Lukashenko in televised remarks to government officials. “But these are people who, it must be said, are very stubborn: Nobody wants to go back. And it’s clear why: they have nowhere to go back to.”

EU officials have held talks with countries in the Middle East to slow the flow of people, many from Iraq and Syria, to the border with Europe. But that will not solve the question of what to do with the thousands already trapped, in many cases denied entry to both Poland and back into Belarus.

Diplomats estimate between 10,000 and 20,000 people face increasingly harsh conditions in the border area as temperatures plummet.

In a highly unlikely scenario, Lukashenko also suggested that Belarus would be ready to transport people directly to Germany. “If the Poles don’t give us a humanitarian corridor, then we can take them to Munich on Belavia,” he said.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Where is China leader since pandemic?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/15/world/biden-xi-summit#where-is-xi-still-in-china-where-he-has-been-throughout-the-pandemic
GIST	<p>That the summit was taking place virtually, not in person, was a concession to China’s leader, Xi Jinping.</p> <p>The White House had hoped that he and President Biden would meet at the Group of 20 gathering in Rome last month, but Mr. Xi did not attend. He has not left China since Mr. Biden took office in January — in fact, not since January 2020, when the coronavirus was beginning to spread from China.</p> <p>The ostensible reason for remaining home still seems to be Covid-19, but some experts have speculated that Mr. Xi could not afford to be away before an important political gathering that ended last week.</p>

	<p>He used that forum to solidify his stature within the Communist Party, bolstering his case for what is widely expected to be a third five-year term as China's paramount leader, beginning next year. With the coronavirus still a threat, it is conceivable that Mr. Xi might stay home until the party's national congress next November.</p> <p>That reflects more than just internal political machinations. It is in keeping with China's increasing insularity, forged by a growing confidence — hubris, some might say — that the country under Mr. Xi's leadership is the master of its own destiny, less dependent on the rest of the world for validation as its economic and military might solidifies.</p> <p>Still, Mr. Xi's absence has coincided with the withering of China's international standing, with public sentiment in many countries turning against the country's behavior at home and abroad. He faced sharp criticism for submitting a letter to the climate talks in Glasgow and for joining India in watering down the final statement to reduce pressure on cutting the use of coal.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 President signs \$1T infrastructure bill
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/15/us/politics/biden-signs-infrastructure-bill.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — President Biden signed a \$1 trillion infrastructure bill into law on Monday afternoon, a bipartisan victory that will pour billions into the nation's roads, ports and power lines.</p> <p>While the bill stopped short of realizing his full-scale ambitions for overhauling America's transportation and energy systems, Mr. Biden pointed to it as evidence that lawmakers could work across party lines to solve problems in Washington.</p> <p>He also said it would better position the United States to compete against China and other nations vying for dominance of 21st century emerging industries.</p> <p>Hours before a virtual summit with President Xi Jinping of China, whose infrastructure initiatives have helped vault China to global leadership in advanced manufacturing and other areas, Mr. Biden said the bill showed democratic governments can deliver for their citizens.</p> <p>"Let's remember what we've got done for the American people when we do come together," Mr. Biden said, celebrating the bill on the South Lawn of the White House. "I truly believe that 50 years from now, historians are going to look back at this moment and say, that's the moment America began to win the competition of the 21st century."</p> <p>The bill Mr. Biden signed will not address the nation's entire backlog of needed infrastructure investments, and it is not as ambitious as Mr. Biden's initial \$2.3 trillion proposal. The compromises that were necessary to win over a large group of Senate Republicans pared back the president's ambitions for investing in "human infrastructure" like home health care and fortifying the nation's physical infrastructure to fight and adapt to climate change.</p> <p>Still, administration officials and a wide range of outside economists and business groups largely agree that the package is the most important step in a generation toward upgrading critical infrastructure — and that it could soon begin to pay dividends for a wide range of businesses and people, from electric vehicle manufacturers to rural web surfers.</p> <p>Some of the first bursts of spending will go toward areas that Mr. Biden prioritized in negotiations, such as tens of billions of dollars to improve access to broadband internet and to replace hazardous lead drinking pipes. Spending has already been announced to help clear backlogs at the nation's ports, which are contributing to shipping delays and price increases as the United States sees a pandemic surge in demand for consumer goods, many of which are imported.</p>

The infrastructure spending will not jolt the American economy like a traditional economic stimulus plan, nor is it meant to. Officials say the administration will focus as much on “shovel-worthy” projects — meaning those that make the most of federal dollars — as they will on “shovel-ready” ones that would dump money into the economy more quickly. The package was designed to deliver money over several years, in part to avoid fueling more price increases across an economy that is experiencing its highest inflation rate in decades.

Mr. Biden and his advisers say they expect the package to deliver a variety of benefits that will power economic growth over time, including leaner supply chains, faster and more equitably distributed internet access and improved educational outcomes for children who will no longer be exposed to water-based lead that stunts brain development.

It also features tens of billions each for rebuilding roads and bridges, upgrading freight and passenger rail systems and cleaning up environmental pollution, all of which could help boost the productivity of the American economy.

Even before Mr. Biden signed the law, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul announced that the state [would use its portion of the money](#) to avoid price and service changes to New York City’s subway, buses and two regional commuter rails.

“This is not designed to be stimulus,” Cecilia Rouse, who chairs the White House Council of Economic Advisers, said in an interview. “It’s designed to be the most strategic, effective investments so that we can continue to compete against China and other countries that are making bigger investments in their infrastructure.”

“We will see investments starting next year,” she added, “beginning with our ports, and beginning with other areas where we know we are far behind.”

The victory comes at a precarious political moment for Mr. Biden. His poll numbers have dropped amid rising inflation, which has sent prices for food, gas and household items soaring. He is struggling to complete the next part of his domestic policy agenda, a \$1.85 trillion collection of tax cuts and spending programs focused on climate change, early childhood and a wide range of social policy initiatives.

On Tuesday, Mr. Biden will fly to New Hampshire to visit a bridge in need of repair as he tries to convince an increasingly uneasy American public that the infrastructure bill will lead to tangible improvements in their lives.

Then he will head to a General Motors plant in Detroit on Wednesday, to highlight funding aimed at building as many as 500,000 electric vehicle charging stations and improving the nation’s electric grids. The spending on electric vehicles in the bill is much lower than Mr. Biden initially proposed, but administration officials say it will accelerate a shift to lower-emission cars and trucks.

“With the combination of this investment and where we know the industry is going,” said Brian Deese, who heads Mr. Biden’s National Economic Council, “we believe this will be the beginning of a real transformation in our vehicle infrastructure.”

The legislation was the product of intense negotiations spanning much of the first year of Mr. Biden’s presidency, and of the [back-slapping](#), coalition-building politics the president has relished in a government career stretching back to the 1970s. Mr. Biden brokered agreements first with Senate Republicans, 18 of whom ultimately voted for the bill, and then with progressive Democrats in the House, who held up its final passage in order to raise pressure on centrists in Mr. Biden’s party to support the larger spending bill.

As Mr. Biden and other speakers noted on Monday, previous presidents had tried and failed to broker big-spending infrastructure deals. Under President Donald J. Trump, “infrastructure week” became a running joke, as administration officials frequently promised to focus on the issue only to be derailed by a rolling

series of scandals. Mr. Trump's team never made a serious push for an infrastructure bill in Congress, choosing instead to focus on a large tax cut that passed in 2017.

Senator Rob Portman, an Ohio Republican who led his party's side in the infrastructure talks, credited Mr. Trump on Monday for elevating the issue among Republicans. Mr. Biden made no mention of that, instead using the moment to talk about how Washington can overcome partisan wrangling when there is agreement on policy.

While the package is smaller than what Mr. Biden originally proposed, about \$550 billion of the bill represents an increase over current spending levels. Researchers at the Brookings Institution estimate that the money will increase federal infrastructure spending as a share of the economy by half over the next five years, putting it nearly on par with the infrastructure provisions of the New Deal under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. If Mr. Biden's \$1.85 trillion spending bill — which includes more money to combat climate change — also passes, they estimate the increased infrastructure spending will eclipse the New Deal.

That increase will challenge the government's ability to spend money on time and effectively. On Sunday, Mr. Biden appointed Mitch Landrieu, the former mayor of New Orleans, to oversee implementation of the infrastructure bill.

"Implementing a historic bill like this will test all of our management facilities," said Adie Tomer, who leads infrastructure work at Brookings' Metropolitan Policy Program. The challenges, he said, include "hiring federal, state, and local officials to direct programming; finding enough skilled tradespeople to execute the work; and securing equipment and materials during a major supply chain crunch."

Liberal economists fault the package for not spending enough, particularly on climate, turning up the pressure on Mr. Biden and congressional Democrats to pass the social policy bill, which is moving through a process that would allow party leaders to pass the bill with no Republican votes.

"Overall, the bill is a step in the right direction," said Mark Paul, an economist at the New College of Florida. "But we need far, far more investment in infrastructure — from the care economy to the green economy — if we are to build a strong and resilient economy for the 21st century."

Lawmakers are expected to take up that larger spending bill later this week, though divisions remain between progressive Democrats and their moderate colleagues, which has complicated the president's attempt to pass a bill along party lines.

The centrists are waiting for a congressional scorekeeper to rule on whether the bill will add to the federal budget deficit over the next 10 years. A critical holdout, Senator Joe Manchin III of West Virginia, has demanded that the bill be fully paid for and not add to the deficit; he has pushed to delay the bill for fear of exacerbating inflation.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Europe toughens rules for unvaccinated
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/15/world/europe/europe-vaccine.html
GIST	<p>ROME — As temperatures drop and coronavirus infections spike across Europe, some countries are introducing increasingly targeted restrictions against the unvaccinated who are driving another wave of contagion and putting economic recoveries, public health and an eventual return to prepandemic freedoms at risk.</p> <p>On Monday, Austria set a new bar for such measures in the West. Facing a 134 percent increase in cases in the last two weeks, the Austrian government cracked down on its unvaccinated population over the age of 12, restricting their movement to traveling for work, school, buying groceries and medical care.</p>

“Our task as the federal government is to protect the people of Austria,” Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg told a news conference on Sunday. “We are fulfilling this responsibility.”

Austria’s step fit a pattern of governments across Europe passing rules to make life harder for the unvaccinated, with the goal of motivating people to get a shot. Taken together, the measures are a bleak and clear sign that a virus that however fleetingly seemed a piece of European history was still very much part of its present and future.

The [World Health Organization warned](#) recently that Europe was once again the epicenter of the pandemic and that half a million people on the continent could die from Covid in the next few months. Europe reported a 10 percent increase in deaths and a 7 percent increase in new infections in the first week of November, compared to the previous week.

Hospitalizations and deaths were mostly in Eastern Europe, but the new wave threatened the economic recoveries and Christmas vacations across the continent. A return to normalcy predicated on the success of vaccination campaigns was being increasingly threatened by the unvaccinated who offered the virus room to run.

That is why governments all around Europe have been taking the extra step of explicitly singling out the unvaccinated. The new rules in Austria amounted to “a massive reduction in contacts between the vaccinated and the unvaccinated,” Professor Eva Schernhammer of the Medical University of Vienna [told the BBC](#).

Similarly, in Germany, which has been besieged by a resurgent virus, the incoming government has said it will impose stricter rules against unvaccinated people, including mandating that they obtain a negative coronavirus test before traveling on buses or trains. In France, booster shots will become requisite for people 65 and older hoping to secure a health pass. And in Italy, vaccination, recent recovery from the virus or frequent negative swabs are required to work.

Nevertheless, some European leaders considered Austria’s new measure a step too far.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain, which has suffered a rash of new cases in recent weeks, kept his resistance to mask mandates and health passes.

“Our friends on the continent have been forced to respond with various degrees of new restrictions, from full lockdowns, to lockdowns for the unvaccinated, to restrictions on business opening hours and restrictions on social gatherings,” Mr. Johnson said Monday, but he doubled down on vaccinations, saying boosters would be offered to those aged 40 and older, and second doses made available to those aged 16 and 17 who have so far been allowed one. He said he worried about “storm clouds that are gathering over the continent.”

This is especially the case in Eastern Europe, where the scars left by decades of misinformation under Communism seemed to have opened up and spread skepticism about medical expertise. Romania, which has [Europe’s second-lowest vaccination rate](#) recently reported the [world’s highest per capita death rate](#) from Covid-19. In Bulgaria, hospitals are inundated.

Last month, the small Baltic nation of Latvia, where resistance to vaccination is high, especially among the ethnic Russian population, responded to its outbreak with a full lockdown. Russia and Ukraine, which each have vaccination rates below 50 percent, also introduced widespread restrictions.

Infections have erupted over the borders in Western Europe.

In Germany, which has suffered a dizzying increase in cases in part because of a [slow rollout of booster vaccines](#), officials had hoped that charging people for swab tests would motivate them to get vaccinated. But they will once again try and keep closer tabs on the virus by making free coronavirus tests available to

all adults in the country. The government has suggested that those tests could be required to enter events and certain venues, even for the vaccinated.

Over the weekend, the three parties joining to form Germany's next governing coalition agreed to impose stricter rules against unvaccinated people, including mandating that they obtain a negative coronavirus test before traveling on buses or trains, as infection rates reach new highs.

Some German states are introducing stricter mask mandates and requiring vaccination instead of negative tests for entry into venues.

Infections have also broken out in northern Italy, on the Austrian and Slovenian borders. Italy, with a vaccination rate over 80 percent for people over 12, already has among the toughest restrictions in Europe through a health pass that requires vaccination or constant swabs for employees to work.

The Italian government in recent days announced that taxis can only carry two people, unless they are family members, and allowed the health authorities or the railway police to stop trains if passengers had symptoms that could be associated with the coronavirus.

"I am worried about an increase in infections ahead of Christmas," Luigi Di Maio, Italy's foreign minister, said at a conference on Sunday, adding that the stringency of the health pass was designed to keep businesses open, and that the country would do everything necessary to stay open.

"Look at the other European states," Mr. Di Maio added, "which have a lower vaccination level than us, they are inserting a series of measures that are much more restrictive than ours."

Greece this month introduced rules requiring unvaccinated people to present a negative rapid or PCR test in order to gain access to public services, banks, shops and hair salons. They needed to do the same to go inside cafes and restaurants, prompting a 24-hour strike planned for Tuesday to protest the new measures. The Greek authorities have said they are also considering further measures against the unvaccinated.

France has announced that masks will be required again in primary schools and that it would tighten restrictions in the face of rising cases, with the number of daily new infections now more than doubled from early October, from about 4,000 to over 8,000.

People over the age of 65 will as of Dec. 15 need to get a booster to keep eligibility for the health pass that allows them into restaurants, museums and long-distance trains.

Countries that had succeeded in vaccinating large percentages of their populations instead relaxed restrictions. Portugal, which has vaccinated nearly 90 percent of its population, on Oct. 1 reduced its health pass requirement and lifted nearly all of its coronavirus restrictions. Spain, which has hit an 80-percent vaccination rate, does not require a health pass.

But the trend seems very much to be toward tightening as winter approaches and the virus spreads. Even Spain's northern Basque region is expected on Tuesday to announce restrictions on gatherings in towns with high infection rates. And Austria's chancellor made clear that Europe's only way out of the pandemic, and lockdowns, was vaccination.

"My aim is very clearly to get the unvaccinated to get themselves vaccinated, and not to lock down the vaccinated," Mr. Schallenberg told Austria's Ö1 radio, according to The Associated Press. "In the long term, the way out of this vicious circle we are in — and it is a vicious circle, we are stumbling from wave to lockdown, and that can't carry on ad infinitum — is only vaccination."

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HEADLINE	11/15 States broaden access to Covid boosters
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/15/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandates#arkansas-boosters-adults-covid

Arkansas on Monday joined Colorado, California and New Mexico in broadening access to Covid-19 boosters, getting ahead of [federal regulators](#) who are close to making a decision on expanded eligibility.

Gov. Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas said at a [news conference](#) on Monday that he had directed the state health department to issue new guidelines on boosters to allow all adults to get one, provided they meet the timing rules. The move made Arkansas the latest state to issue a decision on boosters ahead of a federal ruling.

State leaders have found themselves in a conundrum since August, when President Biden's plan to make [boosters available to all adults](#) was halted by regulators. The leaders have had to decide: Do they wait for a federal directive, or do they make their own vaccination rules?

The decisions they make are more timely than ever, as the United States braces for a possible winter surge. As of Monday night, reported new cases in the United States have averaged nearly 85,000 a day for the past week, a 14 percent increase from two weeks ago, according to a New York Times database.

Reported new deaths are down 14 percent, to 1,129 a day; hospitalizations have decreased seven percent and are averaging more than 46,000 a day.

And in Europe, where the Covid trends are often a harbinger of those in the United States, [a fourth case wave](#) has been driven by the unvaccinated.

Four states, including Arkansas, aren't waiting for a federal decision on boosters, and, on Monday, [New York City](#) became one of the first major cities to tell all adults to get a booster if they want one regardless of whether they are eligible.

In Arkansas, a spokeswoman for the Arkansas health department said [it had updated its recommendations](#) and would be advising health care providers that they can administer the [boosters](#) to an expanded pool of adults.

"What we're finding is that we want more people to get their booster shot and that this is somewhat confusing and limiting as to the eligibility," Mr. Hutchinson said, adding, "we're changing that."

However, a spokeswoman for the governor's office said that Mr. Hutchinson had no plans to issue an executive order to expand booster eligibility.

According to the health department guidelines, Arkansas adults are now eligible for the vaccine booster if it has been at least six months since their second shot of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, or at least two months since they received the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

A growing body of early global research has shown that the vaccines [remain highly protective](#) against hospitalization and death, but that their effectiveness against infection wanes over time. Public health experts say this does not mean the vaccines are not working.

Last week, Pfizer and BioNTech requested that [the Food and Drug Administration expand eligibility of their booster to all adults](#), a request the agency is expected to grant before the winter holiday season. Ahead of a formal recommendation from the federal authorities, several other states have taken different approaches to expand booster eligibility.

The governors of [Colorado](#) and [New Mexico](#) signed executive orders last week expanding eligibility to all adults. In [California](#), Dr. Tomás J. Aragón, the state's public health director, issued a letter last week that said anyone 18 or over is eligible.

The authorities in New York and West Virginia on Monday encouraged all adults to get the booster, but stopped short of a formal policy change. [New York City health officials](#) told health providers to give booster shots to all adults who want them, — guidance that was echoed by Gov. Kathy Hochul. In West Virginia, [Gov. Jim Justice](#) said adults should "absolutely get" a booster.

HEADLINE	11/15 NYC: booster shots to adults seeking them
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/15/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandates#nyc-booster-shots-adults
GIST	<p>New York City health officials on Monday encouraged all adults who want to receive coronavirus vaccine boosters to seek them out, and asked health providers not to turn them away, a move that comes as federal regulators consider expanding the eligibility pool for Pfizer-BioNTech's booster.</p> <p>Anyone who is 18 or older and seeking a booster shot in New York City should not be turned away, said Dr. Dave A. Chokshi, the city's health commissioner, provided it has been at least six months since their second shot of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, or at least two months since they received the single-dose Johnson & Johnson shot.</p> <p>"Clinicians should allow adult patients to determine their own risk of exposure based on their individual circumstances," said Dr. Chokshi.</p> <p>Federal regulators currently allow booster shots for people who are 65 and older, as well as adults who live in long-term care settings, have underlying medical conditions, or work or live in high-risk settings. Last week, Pfizer and BioNTech requested that the Food and Drug Administration expand eligibility of their booster to all adults.</p> <p>"For qualifying for a booster, if you're over 18, one of the specific criteria is being at higher risk and I view all New Yorkers, because of the density of our city, of being at higher risk," said Dr. Mitchell Katz, the head of the city's public hospitals.</p> <p>A growing body of early global research has shown that the vaccines available in the United States have remained highly protective against the disease's worst outcomes over time.</p> <p>But a number of published studies show that their protection against infection, with or without symptoms, has fallen. Public health experts say it does not mean the vaccines are not working. But the significance of waning effectiveness — and whether it suggests that all adults should be eligible for a booster — is still up for debate.</p> <p>Mayor Bill de Blasio and Dr. Chokshi encouraged New Yorkers and health providers to interpret the current federal guidelines more loosely to allow more adults to get the booster now. More than 630,000 New Yorkers have already received a booster shot, Dr. Chokshi said Monday.</p> <p>The move is part of an effort to slow the spread of the virus before the winter and ahead of the holiday season, when spending more time indoors amid dropping temperatures may increase exposure.</p> <p>In New York City, new cases have increased recently, according to a New York Times database: The average of daily cases stood at 1,074 as of Sunday, which is 32 percent higher than it was two weeks ago. Average hospitalizations have fallen 17 percent over the same time period.</p> <p>The city's encouragement comes after California, Colorado and New Mexico have broadened access to boosters.</p> <p>On Monday afternoon, Gov. Kathy Hochul of New York echoed city leaders' pleas. "I am strongly encouraging all New Yorkers who live or work in a high-risk setting to get the booster," she said in a statement. "I received the booster, and believe no one who feels they are at risk should be turned away from getting a Covid-19 booster shot."</p> <p>In Arkansas, Gov. Asa Hutchinson said on Monday that he had directed the state health department to issue new guidelines on boosters to allow all adults to get one, provided they meet the timing rules.</p>

	<p>In an statement, a spokeswoman for the department said it had updated its recommendations and would be advising health care providers that they can administer the boosters to adults.</p> <p>“What we’re finding is that we want more people to get their booster shot and that this is somewhat confusing and limiting as to the eligibility of those that ought to be getting their booster shot and so in consultation with the Department of Health, this, we’re changing that,” Mr. Hutchinson said.</p> <p>If federal regulators sign off on Pfizer and BioNTech’s request, it would make official what health authorities say they already see happening frequently — that many people appear to be getting boosters whether or not they are technically eligible. In mid-August, President Biden announced plans to make boosters available to all adults, but the beginning of the campaign was delayed after regulators insisted they needed more time to review data.</p> <p>On the news show “Fox News Sunday,” Dr. Vivek Murthy, the surgeon general, said that “millions of people are eligible who have not yet gotten their booster shot, and we want to focus on that.” He also acknowledged that some states were seeking “broad protection” for their residents in making their own moves, and that the F.D.A. will weigh in after analyzing the data and ensuring that the booster shots are safe and effective for those not yet eligible.</p> <p>Dr. Chokshi also advised health care providers to continue reaching out to vulnerable populations about booster shots, especially those who are 65 and older, those who have underlying medical conditions, and those who received a Johnson & Johnson vaccine.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Grocery dispute led to shelling in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/15/world/europe/ukraine-russia-war-putin.html
GIST	<p>HRANITNE, Ukraine — Artillery shells fired by Russian-backed separatists shrieked into this small town deep in the flatlands of eastern Ukraine, shearing branches from trees, scooping out craters, blowing up six houses and killing one Ukrainian soldier.</p> <p>It was an all-too-common response to the smallest of provocations — a dispute over grocery shopping for a hundred or so people living in the buffer zone between the separatists and Ukrainian government forces. But in the hair-trigger state of the Ukraine war, minor episodes can grow into full-fledged battles.</p> <p>Hunkered down in a bunker, the Ukrainian commander, Major Oleksandr Sak, requested a counterstrike from a sophisticated new weapon in Ukraine’s arsenal, a Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 armed drone.</p> <p>Deployed for the first time in combat by Ukraine and provided by a country that is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the drone hit a howitzer operated by the separatists. Things quickly escalated.</p> <p>Across the border, Russia scrambled jets. The next day, Russian tanks mounted on rail cars rumbled toward the Ukrainian border. Diplomacy in Berlin, Moscow and Washington went into high gear.</p> <p>The sudden spike in hostilities last month underscored the tenuous nature of the cease-fire that exists along the 279-mile front in the Ukraine war. It set off a new round of ominous warnings from Moscow, and highlighted President Vladimir V. Putin’s willingness to escalate what is known as hybrid conflict, a blend of military and other means for creating disruption — including exploiting humanitarian crises like the current one on the Polish-Belarusian border.</p> <p>The drone strike in Hranitne also raised fears in Western capitals that Russia would use the fighting as a pretext for a new intervention in Ukraine, potentially drawing the United States and Europe into a new phase of the conflict.</p>

“Our concern is that Russia may make the serious mistake of attempting to rehash what it undertook back in 2014 when it amassed forces along the border, crossed into sovereign Ukrainian territory, and did so claiming falsely that it was provoked,” Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken [told journalists in Washington](#) last week.

The battle came at an increasingly volatile moment in the conflict. This fall, commercial [satellite photos](#) and videos posted on social media have shown that Russian armored vehicles had [massed near the Ukrainian border](#); Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelensky, has estimated the buildup at 100,000 troops. And Russian rhetoric toward Ukraine has hardened.

Amid this heightened tension, the drone strike in particular became a flash point for the Kremlin. Alarmed that Ukraine possessed this highly effective new military capability, Russia called the strike a destabilizing act that violated the cease-fire agreement reached in 2015.

Mr. Putin has twice in the past week pointed to the drone attack as a Ukrainian escalation, justifying a potential Russian response. He raised the issue in a phone call with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany.

Asked on Saturday about accusations from Washington that Russia was massing troops on the Ukraine border, Mr. Putin responded by [criticizing the United States for supporting the drone strike](#), as well as for conducting a naval drill in the Black Sea, which he called [a “serious challenge”](#) for Russia.

“A sense is created that they just aren’t letting us relax,” he said. “Well, let them know we are not relaxing.”

Mr. Putin has long made clear that he views Ukraine as inseparable from Russia. In July he published an [article](#) outlining that doctrine, describing Russia and Ukraine as “essentially” one country divided by Western interference in the post-Soviet period, an apparent justification for Russian-Ukrainian unification. Russia has already annexed Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula.

“We will never allow our historical territories and people close to us living there to be used against Russia,” he wrote.

Hacking, electoral meddling, energy politics and a recent migrant crisis on the border of Belarus and Poland have all strained ties between the West and Russia. But nowhere are the tensions more overt than in this conflict zone that cuts through villages and farmland, where opposing soldiers — one side backed by the United States, the other by Russia — face off.

Russia intervened militarily in Ukraine after street protesters deposed a pro-Russian Ukrainian president in 2014. Moscow sent soldiers wearing ski masks and unmarked uniforms to the Crimean Peninsula, whipping up the rebellion in the east in two separatist enclaves, the Donetsk and Luhansk people’s republics.

The frontline in the war is sometimes called a new Berlin Wall, a dividing line in today’s geopolitics. It is an eerie realm of half-abandoned towns, fields and forests.

It is also a tinderbox that requires only a match to spark new hostilities. In late October, the buffer zone near Hranitne provided one.

In most places along the front, a scant few hundred yards separate two trench lines. But in some areas, including Hranitne, the gap widens to a few miles, and people live in between the two armies, in a no-man’s-land known in Ukraine as the “gray zone.” Residents must cross the Ukrainian trench line to shop and send their children to school, protected by an uneasy truce. Residents are aware of the danger, but are too poor to move.

“It’s scary,” said Oleksandr Petukhov, a retiree as he cleared the last checkpoint one recent day carrying a bag of cheese and eggs. “This is a ridiculous situation.”

In Hranitne, the access point for shopping on the Ukrainian side is a footbridge over the Kalmius River, a slow-moving flow of inky green water. Ukrainian soldiers peek out from above sandbag parapets as shoppers trickle across the bridge.

The troubles began about a month ago when separatists closed a checkpoint on their side — where local residents also traveled for shopping — for unclear reasons, possibly as a coronavirus precaution.

In response, on Oct. 25, Volodymyr Vesvolkin, the administrator of Hranitne, a position akin to mayor, led a contingent of about a dozen soldiers across the footbridge. The same day, the military laid concrete blocks for a new bridge about 700 yards away that would be accessible for vehicles.

His motive, Mr. Vesvolkin said, was humanitarian: to assure locals of access for shopping and deliveries of coal for winter heating.

“How can it violate anything?” Mr. Vesvolkin said in an interview. “This is our village. These are our people. They walk several kilometers to buy groceries.”

The separatists interpreted it otherwise — as a land grab — and soon their artillery shells filled the air.

Even Ukrainian military officers concede a misperception was possible. “They maybe thought we would send heavy weapons” across the new bridge, Major Sak said.

Through the night and into the next morning, a separatist unit with 122-millimeter artillery guns fired toward Ukrainian forces in what is known as a shoot-and-scoot maneuver intended to skirt counterattacks by the enemy.

In total, the separatists fired about 120 rounds at the unfinished new bridge, but every shot missed. They hit nearby houses instead, destroying one with such force that it appeared turned inside out, with a pile of cinder blocks covering the street.

Major Sak said he requested the drone strike because it was the only weapon that could hit the maneuvering enemy artillery and because civilians were in danger, though none were hit.

“Only modern weapons allow us to halt Russia’s aggression,” he said in an interview.

Most military analysts say flare-ups in Ukraine are more a pretext for strategic saber-rattling than a cause. But they are sparks in an already dangerous world, and the West remains on high alert this week as Russia takes an increasingly bellicose stance toward Ukraine.

When the fighting in Hranitne subsided, the villagers emerged with at least one small victory: they finally got their groceries.

Two days after the drone strike, separatists opened their checkpoint, allowing the Red Cross to deliver 50-pound boxes of food to each house. The boxes held rice, sugar, sunflower oil, macaroni, flour and cans of meat and fish.

Tatyana Yefesko, an elementary schoolteacher, said she appreciated the delivery. But it was hardly a long-term solution.

“Any small flare-up could turn into a big war,” she said. “Everybody asks, ‘Why did this happen? Who needs this?’ I don’t know. But history shows us every big war started with something small.”

HEADLINE	11/15 Illegal Mexico-US border crossings dip
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/15/us/migrants-border-crossings.html
GIST	<p>After a major influx of migrants overwhelmed the southwestern border throughout much of the spring and summer, unauthorized crossings in October were down for the third straight month, federal authorities announced on Monday, with the number of Haitians plummeting by more than 90 percent.</p> <p>But the drop in Haitian apprehensions probably signals only a temporary pause, as tens of thousands of people from the troubled Caribbean nation were continuing to trek north from South America or were stalled in Mexico, still hoping to reach the United States, border analysts said.</p> <p>The U.S. Border Patrol intercepted 164,303 people overall along the border with Mexico, a 14 percent decrease from September.</p> <p>That included 902 Haitians, compared with more than 17,600 who crossed in September, many of them facing squalid conditions near Del Rio, Texas, after wading across the Rio Grande. The September surge, which took place over a few days, posed an urgent challenge for the Biden administration, which responded with dozens of deportation flights that returned more than 8,500 Haitians to their home country, even as many other migrants were allowed to remain or were expelled a short distance across the border to Mexico.</p> <p>Biden administration officials said the deportations were consistent with its enforcement policy. But the sometimes harsh treatment and speedy removals have been condemned by human rights advocates, who said desperate migrants were being returned to a country ravaged by natural disasters and a political and security crisis.</p> <p>“It’s clear that the recent spike in Haitian expulsions provided a short-term deterrent,” said Jessica Bolter, a policy analyst at the nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute. “It’s less clear that it will have a long-term effect.”</p> <p>“We have seen in the past periods when migrants were willing to pause and wait and see what the new situation was on the ground before continuing on their journeys north,” Ms. Bolter said.</p> <p>After former President Donald J. Trump took office, unauthorized entries across the U.S.-Mexico border tumbled, only to steadily rise again as migrants realized that Mr. Trump’s pledge to build a border wall would take time, and that not everyone would be deported, she said.</p> <p>Facing U.S. pressure, Mexican authorities have been trying in the last month to stop Haitians and Central Americans from traveling north to the United States after they enter Mexico from Guatemala.</p> <p>At least 20,000 Haitians are currently stranded in the town of Tapachula near the Guatemalan border, according to independent estimates. A majority of them had been living for years in Chile, where immigration policies have hardened, or Brazil, where the economy has been pounded by the coronavirus pandemic.</p> <p>Haitians now account for a majority of asylum applicants in Mexico even though their goal in most cases is solely to receive the documents that will enable them to advance toward the United States. Only after registering are Haitians allowed to travel freely within Mexico.</p> <p>As of Nov. 1, the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance had received about 38,000 asylum applications from Haitians in 2021, more than 20,000 of them during the months of August, September and October, an influx that created a monthslong backlog.</p> <p>“The numbers of Haitians has come down because Mexico is preventing people from leaving Tapachula to continue their journey to the Mexican-U.S. border,” said Guerline Jozef, executive director of Haitian Bridge Alliance, an advocacy group.</p>

“They cannot leave the area without proper documentation,” she said. “If they try, they will be detained by Mexican authorities.”

She said the rush of thousands of Haitians across the U.S. border in September was a result of misinformation, with many believing that they would be allowed to enter.

The ability of nationals from countries such as Ecuador and Brazil to enter Mexico without visas had prompted many people from those countries to travel by air to Mexico, where smugglers met them and guided them across the border.

But Mexico recently started requiring visas from Ecuadoreans, which likely accounts for a plunge in unauthorized crossings of people from that country into the United States, with arrivals down to 744 from 7,353 in September. Mexico is expected to begin requiring visas from Brazilians this month.

Arrivals were up last month for Nicaragua, to 9,212 from 7,298 in September, and Venezuela, to 13,406 from 10,814 the previous month. Both countries have been wracked by political instability.

“Clearly the pressure imposed by the U.S. on Mexico to increase its own enforcement and tighten its visa policies has had an impact on very recent migration flows,” Ms. Bolter said. “Ultimately, this is still a region that is facing economic and political crises and we will continue to see migration from the region to the United States.”

The U.S. Border Patrol intercepted more than 1.7 million unauthorized migrants in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, the highest number recorded since at least 1960, when the government first began tracking such entries.

However, many were repeat crossers — migrants who had been quickly expelled to Mexico under a pandemic emergency measure known as Title 42, only to try again and again.

Of those crossing last month, 29 percent had made at least one previous attempt over the past 12 months.

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HEADLINE	11/15 British Columbia landslides; evacuations
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/15/world/canada/british-columbia-landslides-rain.html
GIST	<p>Hundreds of people were rescued from highways in British Columbia on Monday, officials said, after torrential rain set off landslides that trapped people in their cars and prompted evacuations.</p> <p>Officials said that about 275 people who had been stuck on Highway 7 near the town of Agassiz, a small community east of Vancouver, since Sunday evening had been rescued. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reported that the helicopter rescue operation had ended by nightfall.</p> <p>Jordan Turner, British Columbia’s communications director for emergency management, said by telephone late Monday night that approximately 150 more people had been saved from other stretches of highway in the area. He said that crews had whisked drivers away by helicopter and cleared debris from the road.</p> <p>“There are no longer any people or vehicles stranded between slides at this point in time,” he said.</p> <p>Mike Farnworth, British Columbia’s minister of public safety, told reporters on Monday afternoon that about 80 to 100 vehicles had become trapped on Highway 7. Rescues were underway in Agassiz and the nearby district of Hope, he added.</p> <p>“We’ve heard from people who are concerned about their loved ones being in their vehicles and trapped on these slides,” he said. “We hear you, and we know it’s difficult. But help is on the way.”</p>

As of Monday afternoon, there had been no confirmed reports of fatalities from any accidents related to the severe weather, Mr. Farnworth said.

The heavy rainfall extended into the Pacific Northwest of the United States, including Washington State, where Gov. Jay Inslee issued a severe weather state of emergency on Monday night for 14 counties, making state money available to respond. The governor also instructed the state's emergency management division, with the help of the Washington National Guard, to coordinate assistance to the affected areas.

Flooding prompted Interstate 5, a major roadway connection the United States and Canada, to be closed down in both directions in Bellingham, Wash., about 24 miles south of the border, [Washington's transportation department](#) said.

Residents of Merritt, a Canadian city of more than 7,000 people about 170 miles northeast of Vancouver, were told on Monday to leave their homes immediately after heavy rain caused the Coldwater River to spill its banks. The city [announced](#) that barricades would be erected to prohibit access to the city after 4 p.m. Monday.

Flooding then disabled the city's waste water system, [a municipal notice said, warning that anyone who stayed](#) faced a "risk of mass sewage backup" that could threaten their health.

Merritt officials said floodwaters had also inundated two bridges that spanned the river, which flows for 59 miles from the Cascade mountain range, and had overwhelmed a third bridge, making it impassable.

"To the people of Merritt, and to all British Columbians affected by the flooding: Please stay safe," Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [said on Twitter](#) on Monday. "We're ready to provide whatever assistance is needed as you deal with and recover from the flooding and this extreme weather."

In Agassiz, Mayor Sylvia Pranger declared a state of emergency after a landslide occurred and a flood watch warning was issued for the District of Kent, which includes Agassiz.

Martina Martinkova, who was driving with her daughter on Highway 7 near Agassiz, spent more than half a day in her car, which was one of at least dozens of vehicles brought to a standstill by the muck.

In an [interview aired by the CBC](#), Ms. Martinkova, sitting in her dark car with her child peering over her shoulder from the back seat, said people in vehicles around her were sharing food and water throughout the ordeal.

"We were very lucky it didn't hit us," she said of the landslide, adding that the group had fruit and Coke. "It is very scary."

Paul Doel, who became trapped with his family in a pickup on Sunday night because of two mudslides north of Hope, told the CBC that he and other stranded motorists had "built a little bit of a community."

He said that at the largest of the two slides, "it looks like the side of the mountain has just come apart," leaving a huge pile of debris along a large stretch of the highway.

On Sunday, before he became stuck, Mr. Doel said that the heavy rain had washed out several sections of the highway and created deep potholes that destroyed the tires of several vehicles.

About 150 people were trapped in Mr. Doel's group, he said, including health care workers and a highway department crew member. Despite the long hours without word from the authorities, he said no one had panicked.

"We're just hanging out," he said, adding: "We've got internet so that's saving a lot of people."

	<p>The weather system was caused by an atmospheric river, part of a convergence of storms that was so vast that it swept from California into Washington and southern British Columbia.</p> <p>In Washington, heavy rains caused flooding across parts of the state on Monday, including in the city of Forks, in a northwest corner of the state, where helicopter crews were needed to evacuate 10 people from a residential area, according to the U.S. Coast Guard of the Pacific Northwest.</p> <p>In Whatcom County, in a northern part of the state that borders Canada, flooding prompted rescue operations, according to the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office, and a mudslide shut down part of Interstate 5, according to the Washington State Patrol.</p> <p>Justin Pullin, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service Seattle, said the region has experienced a “really wet fall this year.”</p> <p>This week, the region was under a “long-duration rainfall event,” resulting in saturated grounds that, combined with the strong winds, have made bluffs unstable.</p> <p>The severe weather comes after weeks of wildfires in the region. The authorities have warned that areas where vegetation has been shorn by fires could become susceptible to streams of rushing mud during heavy rains. Merritt had experienced record high temperatures and wildfires during the summer.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Shipping rates fall; but ports still jammed
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ocean-shipping-rates-fall-but-ports-are-still-jammed-11636972201?mod=hp_list_pos5
GIST	<p>The cost to move a container across the Pacific fell by more than one-quarter last week, the biggest decline in two years. The decline signals that the huge demand for Asian exports is easing, though shipping executives say it will be months before the logjam of ships outside of U.S. ports clears up.</p> <p>The decline in ocean-freight rates coincides with the winding down of the traditional peak shipping season, which starts in August when Western importers start to load up on cargo ahead of the year-end holidays. With most products at least on their way, space is gradually opening up on the front end of the trip, leading to lower prices.</p> <p>That easing hasn't made its way to U.S. ports, where dozens of ships packed with everything from Christmas trees to electronics and heavy machinery are still waiting for weeks to unload at big gateways like Los Angeles and Long Beach, Calif. Shipping executives say they don't expect the traffic to ease until February at the earliest.</p> <p>“It could be months before the logjams ease, but if we don't get more closures at ports, the volumes should become more manageable after Chinese New Year,” said Lars Jensen, chief executive of Denmark-based Vespucci Maritime.</p> <p>The cost to move a container from China to the U.S. West Coast fell 26% last week compared with the week before to \$13,295, according to the Freightos Baltic Index. That is still more than three times as high since the start of the year when the same box cost \$4,200.</p> <p>Freightos head of research Judah Levine said it was the first decline since June in the premium cargo owners pay to secure space on ships.</p> <p>Analysts and freight forwarders said there are fewer ships with short-term charters sailing across the Pacific after wholesale inventories rose 13% year over year in September, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.</p>

Big importers such as Amazon.com Inc., [Walmart](#) Inc. and [Home Depot](#) Inc. account for around one-quarter of all imports that sail into the U.S. West Coast. They have been struggling to replenish their inventories since late July, when freight rates shot up more than 70% within a couple of weeks.

California's Port of Los Angeles is struggling to keep up with the crush of cargo containers arriving at its terminals, creating one of the biggest choke points in the global supply-chain crisis. This exclusive aerial video illustrates the scope of the problem and the complexities of this process. Photo: Thomas C. Miller
Demand for ship space has been so high that some of these retailers [chartered their own vessels](#) to bring in cargo like decorations, gadgets and other hot-selling items before Christmas.

"The inventory numbers suggest that big retailers have stocked up and ordered early during the port delays," said Jonathan Roach, a container analyst at London-based Braemar ACM Shipbroking.

The Lunar New Year this year falls on Feb. 1, when millions of workers go on break for at least a week to visit families and manufacturing output in China falls substantially.

With more capacity from big vessels expected to come on line, freight forwarders say dozens of smaller ships that have been chartered since the early summer will gradually withdraw to smaller, regional trade routes.

These smaller ships cost twice as much to operate, with the average cost per box across the Pacific at around \$30,000, according to freight forwarders.

For now, the wait to dock in the gateways of Southern California continues unabated. There are around 80 boxships waiting to unload at Los Angeles and Long Beach for two weeks or more.

"I've never seen so many smaller ships like ours waiting to dock outside L.A.," said Madalin Butoi, captain of the Hyundai Express, a Greek-operated vessel with 5,000 boxes that has been stuck outside the port since Oct. 3 after sailing in from South Korea.

"Everybody has gone bonkers to secure space on any kind of ship," he said. "It will become better, but it won't happen this year."

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HEADLINE	11/15 Universities sharp losses during pandemic
SOURCE	https://www.voanews.com/a/us-colleges-universities-see-sharp-losses-during-pandemic/6313373.html
GIST	<p>The number of foreign students studying at U.S. colleges and universities sharply declined for the school year that started in September 2020. Experts attribute the decline to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>A survey of almost 3,000 institutions of higher education in the U.S. showed a 15% decrease in the number of international students attending the 2020-2021 school year.</p> <p>The number of new student enrollments was slashed by 45.6%.</p> <p>This brings the total of enrolled international students to 914,095, the first time since the 2015-2016 academic year the number fell below the 1 million mark after a decade of swift increases.</p> <p>International students comprise 4.6% of the nearly 20 million students enrolled in U.S. higher education.</p> <p>The number of students from China and India continue to dominate enrollment at U.S. colleges and universities. Combined, they continue to make up more than half of all the international students in the U.S.</p> <p>Students from China declined by 14.8% from the previous year to 317,299, or 34.7% of all international students.</p>

Students from India declined by 13.2% from the previous year to 167,583, or 18.3% of all international students.

The pandemic emanated from China in December 2019. International students left the U.S. to return to their home countries for winter break, with many returning to U.S. campuses in January 2020. U.S. campuses locked down in March 2020 around spring break, and all students were sent home, went home or remained in the U.S. as colleges and universities moved classes to online learning.

The research was conducted by the Institute of International Education (IIE), headquartered in New York, and released November 15. IIE, founded in 1919, is a nonprofit organization funded by the U.S. State Department, and it focuses on “international student exchange and aid, foreign affairs, and international peace and security,” according to its website. Its mission is to “build more peaceful and equitable societies by advancing scholarship, building economies and promoting access to opportunity.”

New York University remained the top destination school for international students among all U.S. colleges and universities. New York state hosted the second-largest amount — 106,894 of the 914,095 total — after first-place California, which hosted 132,758 students. The University of Southern California moved from the third to the fourth slot – overtaken by New York City’s Columbia University – but the University of California campuses in San Diego, Los Angeles, Berkeley, Irvine and Davis were included in the top 18.

Northeastern University in Boston was the second most-popular school for international students: 15,880 of the 66,273 who attend school in Massachusetts. Another 10,646 international students attended Boston University, located nearby, among at least 10 other colleges and universities in an area known locally as the Miracle Mile.

IIE also released a more optimistic Fall snapshot that surveyed more than 860 institutions about enrollment for the school year that started in August and September 2021.

“The findings of the 2021 Fall International Student Enrollment Snapshot reflect the resilience of U.S. higher education institutions and student mobility during the COVID-19 pandemic,” IIE stated. “Higher education institutions report a 68% increase in the number of new international students enrolling for the first time at a U.S. institution in the U.S. or online from abroad, a surge from the 46% decline reported in Open Doors 2021.”

Of those 860 institutions, 70% reported an increase in new student enrollment, while 10% said enrollment was maintained and 20% reported a decrease.

As of fall 2021, 99% of colleges and universities that participated in the survey reported holding classes in person or a hybrid of in person and online. At least 65% reported having international students on campus.

Seventy-seven percent reported spending as much, if not more, on student recruitment compared to previous years.

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HEADLINE	11/15 US, China leaders meet in virtual summit
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/15/world/biden-xi-summit#biden-and-xi-are-meeting-amid-economic-and-military-tensions
GIST	President Biden and China’s leader, Xi Jinping, pledged at a virtual summit to improve cooperation, but offered no major breakthroughs after more than three hours of talks.

Mr. Biden emphasized the need to keep “communication lines open,” according to a White House readout of the meeting, as the two countries confront [disagreements over issues](#) like the future of [Taiwan](#), the militarization of the South China Sea and cybersecurity.

Mr. Biden addressed several points of disagreement, including [China’s human rights abuses](#), [Taiwan](#), and China’s support of its state-based industries.

The leaders also discussed areas in which Chinese and American interests appear to be aligned, including [efforts to combat global warming](#).

Mr. Biden, seated in the Roosevelt Room at the White House before two large screens, opened the discussion shortly before 8 p.m. in Washington, noting that the two have “spent an awful lot of time talking to each other” over the years, dating to when Mr. Biden was vice president and Mr. Xi was a rising power.

“We need to establish some common-sense guardrails,” Mr. Biden said, using a phrase his administration has often cited as a goal for a challenging relationship. He added: “We have a responsibility to the world as well as to our people.”

Mr. Xi, speaking next from a chamber in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, also struck a conciliatory tone, especially compared to a series of acerbic statements by Chinese officials over the course of the year. He called Mr. Biden “my old friend” and said the two countries should work together.

China’s state television network reported that Mr. Xi “expressed his readiness to work with President Biden to build consensus and take active steps to move China-U.S. relations forward in a positive direction.” He also called for mutual respect, an implicit criticism of the Biden administration’s handling of relations.

The talks ended at around half-past noon in Beijing, after about three and a half hours, according to the Chinese state television network, C.C.T.V.

Since becoming president, Mr. Biden has spoken twice with Mr. Xi, but they have not met in person this year. Administration officials said the virtual meeting was meant to reassure both sides that misunderstandings and miscommunications would not lead to unintended clashes.

Mr. Biden has repeatedly suggested that it should be possible to avoid active military engagement with China, even as the United States engages in vigorous competition with Beijing and continues to confront the Chinese leadership on several significant issues.

But the call, which was initiated at Mr. Biden’s request, reflects his administration’s deep concern that the chances of keeping conflict at bay may be diminishing.

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HEADLINE	11/15 China: virtual summit vindication, win
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/15/world/biden-xi-summit#china-counts-the-talks-as-a-win-achieved-without-any-compromise
GIST	<p>From China’s perspective, the virtual meeting itself amounts to a vindication of its strategy to wait out the new administration.</p> <p>After the tumult of the Trump years, China’s leaders hoped to reset the relationship with the United States when President Biden took office in January. When that didn’t happen, officials seemed surprised, then angry.</p> <p>Senior officials lashed out as Mr. Biden’s national security team challenged China on a variety of issues — from Taiwan to the western Chinese region of Xinjiang, where the State Department has declared</p>

a [genocide](#) of [Uyghurs](#) and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities is underway. In a speech in Beijing in July celebrating 100 years of the [Chinese Communist Party](#), China's leader, Xi Jinping, warned: "The Chinese people will never allow foreign forces to bully, oppress or enslave us. Whoever nurses delusions of doing that will crack their heads and spill blood on the Great Wall of steel built from the flesh and blood of 1.4 billion Chinese people."

What Beijing did not do was compromise on any of its policy and behaviors that have stoked exactly those divisions, including menacing military patrols and exercises around Taiwan. Instead, it squeezed concessions out of the United States.

Those included [the release in September of Meng Wanzhou](#), an executive of the telecommunications giant Huawei who had been detained in Canada in 2018 on an American arrest warrant. Beijing, infuriated by the detention at the time, retaliated by essentially taking two Canadians hostage.

China continues to warn the United States of its red lines, especially over the fate of Taiwan, but the tone of various public statements has mellowed considerably. That is also in China's interest heading into the Winter Olympics in Beijing in February and the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party in November.

"I think that both countries want to bring down the temperature," said Ali Wyne, an analyst focused on U.S.-China relations with the Eurasia Group, a consultancy based in Washington. "They both recognize that threshold between intensifying competition and unconstrained rivalry is tenuous."

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HEADLINE	11/15 Taiwan hottest of hot button issues
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/15/world/biden-xi-summit#taiwan-is-the-hottest-of-the-hot-button-issues-between-the-us-and-china
GIST	<p>China's leader, Xi Jinping, urged the United States not to test his country's resolve on the question of Taiwan, an island democracy Beijing claims is part of its territory.</p> <p>"We are patient and are willing to strive for the prospect of peaceful reunification with the utmost sincerity," Mr. Xi told President Biden, according to a readout on the meeting released by Chinese state media. "But China will have to take resolute measures if the 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces provoke, compel or even cross the red line."</p> <p>In vivid language that has come to define Beijing's strident rhetoric, Mr. Xi criticized politicians in the United States who he said sought to use the island's status as leverage over Beijing — a trend he described as dangerous. "It is playing with fire, and if you play with fire, you will get burned," the Chinese readout cited Mr. Xi as saying.</p> <p>No issue between the United States and China is more contentious than the fate of Taiwan, which functions as an independent nation in all but official recognition by most of the world.</p> <p>The People's Republic of China has claimed Taiwan since the defeated Nationalist forces of Chiang Kai-shek retreated there in 1949, but in recent months Beijing has grown increasingly vocal in criticizing U.S. efforts to strengthen the island's democracy and its military defenses.</p> <p>Beijing's assertive language is often coupled with displays of its growing military prowess. It has menaced Taiwan with military exercises simulating an amphibious assault and air patrols that have swept through the island's air defense identification zone. Many military analysts, including some in the Pentagon, believe that the maneuvers by an increasingly well-equipped Chinese military could be a prelude to an invasion.</p> <p>The Biden administration, like the Trump administration before it, has warned China that its military operations and threats are dangerous. The United States, which withdrew its official recognition of Taiwan</p>

	<p>as a condition of re-establishing relations with China in 1979, has responded by stepping up diplomatic efforts to bolster President Tsai Ing-wen of Taiwan.</p> <p>That has included visits by officials and lawmakers, as well as weapon sales.</p> <p>China says those efforts stoke popular sentiment in Taiwan to formally declare independence, which Beijing has warned would lead to war. Wariness in China intensified when President Biden answered a question at a televised town hall last month by declaring, imprecisely, that the United States was committed to Taiwan's defense in the case of an attack.</p> <p>In a phone call with Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken over the weekend, Mr. Wang, China's foreign minister, warned, "Any connivance of and support for the 'Taiwan independence' forces undermine peace across the Taiwan Strait and would only boomerang in the end."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Question hangs over summit: Cold War?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/15/world/biden-xi-summit#a-question-hangs-over-the-summit-is-this-a-cold-war
GIST	<p>Lurking beneath the many tensions between Beijing and Washington is the question of whether the two countries are slipping into a Cold War, or something quite different.</p> <p>One of the few areas of agreement between Xi Jinping, China's leader, and President Biden is that letting relations devolve into Cold War behavior would be a mistake of historic proportions.</p> <p>Mr. Xi said in a speech on Thursday that "the Asia-Pacific region cannot and should not relapse into the antagonism and division of the Cold War era." Addressing the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum with a recorded message, he urged Asian countries to resist forming "small circles on geopolitical grounds," a clear reference to Mr. Biden's efforts to shore up alliances of democratically minded countries to counter China.</p> <p>Mr. Biden has insisted that the United States is not seeking a new Cold War. His national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said last week, "we have the choice not to do that." The summit meeting between the two leaders is part of a White House effort to make sure that the right choices are made — and that accidents and misunderstandings do not propel either country in the wrong direction.</p> <p>There are many reasons to argue that what is happening today is quite different from the Cold War. The amount of economic interchange, and entanglement, between the United States and China is huge; with the Soviet Union it was minuscule. Both sides would have a huge amount to lose from a Cold War; Mr. Xi and Mr. Biden both know that and have talked about the risks.</p> <p>Other deep links — the mutual dependencies on technology, information and raw data that leaps the Pacific in milliseconds on American and Chinese-dominated networks — also never existed in the Cold War.</p> <p>"The size and complexity of the trade relationship is underappreciated," Mr. Biden's top Asia adviser, Kurt M. Campbell, said in July as part of his argument of why this moment significantly differs from the Cold War of 40 years ago.</p> <p>Still, with his repeated references this year to a generational struggle between "autocracy and democracy," Mr. Biden has conjured the ideological edge of the 1950s and '60s. And so has Mr. Xi at moments, with his talk about assuring that China is not dependent on the West for critical technologies, while also trying to make sure that the West is dependent on China.</p> <p>Without question, the past several months have resounded with echoes of Cold War behavior: the Chinese air force running sorties in Taiwan's air identification zone; Beijing expanding its space</p>

program, [launching three more astronauts to its space station](#) and accelerating its tests of [hypersonic missiles](#) meant to defeat U.S. defenses; and the [release of a top Huawei executive](#) for two Canadians and two Americans in [what looked like a prisoner swap](#).

At the same time, the United States announced that it would [provide nuclear submarine technology to Australia](#), with the prospect that its subs could pop up, undetected, along the Chinese coast. It did not escape Chinese commentators that the last time the United States shared that kind of technology was in 1958, when Britain adopted naval reactors as part of the effort to counter Russia's expanding nuclear arsenal.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Inflation in Seattle: what's up, what's not
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/with-inflation-on-the-rise-heres-whats-gone-up-in-price-in-seattle-and-what-hasnt/
GIST	<p>Inflation is on everyone's mind these days. We've all seen the news coverage on the rising Consumer Price Index, which began climbing in May — but precisely what does that mean for your trip to the local supermarket or the shopping center? Which goods and services in Seattle have been hit the hardest?</p> <p>To find out, I turned to the Cost of Living Index, which is published quarterly by the Arlington, Virginia-based Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness, a nonprofit research and policy organization. For more than 50 years, the Cost of Living Index, or COLI, has measured the costs of a variety of consumer goods and services in hundreds of U.S. cities on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>COLI researchers collect their data during the same three-day period each quarter. For a city the size of Seattle, COLI researchers collect as many as 10 sample prices for each item, when possible. They're given detailed instructions on how to select each item (such as brand, size and so on) to ensure the items are as comparable as possible between cities. Taxes are not included in the price.</p> <p>Typically this data is used to compare living costs in one city to another. But for this column, I used it to compare Seattle to itself. I looked at prices from the just-released 3rd quarter data for 2021 (July through September), and the same release from one year earlier.</p> <p>The data for Seattle shows that 32 of the 57 items covered in COLI survey have gone up in the past year, and for many of these, prices have increased significantly. Even so, the remaining 25 items dropped in price, or stayed the same.</p> <p>The biggest increase captured in the data is for the cost of gasoline, which is probably not a surprise to anyone. Gasoline prices in the U.S. are at a seven-year high. A gallon of regular, unleaded gasoline typically costs \$4.21 in the city of Seattle in the new data, up \$1.35 from one year earlier — an increase of about 47%.</p> <p>The COLI shows that clothing prices have also been hit hard by inflation, which may be the result of pandemic-related issues with the supply chain. The survey includes several items of clothing, all of which have increased by double digits in Seattle.</p> <p>The biggest increase was for a pair of name-brand boys bluejeans, purchased at a major department store. In the most recent data, the average price was \$43.75, up from \$30.15 one year earlier — a 45% increase.</p> <p>Some fast-food prices have also gone way up. The price of a McDonald's Quarter-pounder with cheese in Seattle jumped 40% in one year (McDonald's has blamed wage increases and supply costs for the price increases nationally). A fried chicken sandwich from one of the major fast-food chains went up nearly as much. But Domino's pizza prices increased by a more modest 5%.</p> <p>Quite a few grocery store items in Seattle have increased significantly in price, but there are some others that have gone down.</p>

	<p>Some of the biggest price jumps in Seattle captured in the COLI data include the cost for a pound of rib-eye steak and a bottle of extra-virgin olive oil. On the other hand, some items, such as a 2 liter bottle of Coke and a half-gallon of milk, have had double-digit declines in price.</p> <p>The COLI shows alcohol prices are up, and in particular the price of beer. A six-pack of Heineken (12-ounce. size) in Seattle increased 26% in one year.</p> <p>The costs for a number of local services have increased. There are reports of a spike in demand for veterinary services locally, and perhaps that explains the 26% increase in the cost of an annual exam for a healthy young dog.</p> <p>The cost of major appliance repair and car repair — represented in the COLI by washing machine repair and tire balancing — are both up as well in Seattle.</p> <p>One of the largest price declines, though, is for a dental teeth cleaning, down about 15%. The price of a men’s barbershop haircut has dropped nearly as much — perhaps shops have lowered prices because, with so many of us spending more time at home since the pandemic began, we’ve let our grooming habits slide a bit.</p> <p>I’ll mention one more item the COLI shows has not gone up in price, despite the current inflation: the cost of a digital subscription to your local big-city newspaper remains unchanged from one year ago. Please forgive the shameless plug.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Court allows cops’ lawsuit against Sawant
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/court-ruling-allows-seattle-police-officers-to-proceed-with-lawsuit-against-councilmember-kshama-sawant/
GIST	<p>A federal court ruling will allow two Seattle police officers to proceed with their lawsuit claiming that City Councilmember Kshama Sawant defamed them when she publicly called their 2016 fatal shooting of Che Taylor “a blatant murder at the hands of police.”</p> <p>The ruling by a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit reverses an earlier dismissal of the case, reinstates the claims of Officers Michael Spaulding and Scott Miller, and sends their case back to a federal court in Seattle.</p> <p>U.S. District Court Judge Marsha Pechman had dismissed Spaulding’s and Miller’s third amended complaint in December 2020, after ruling it had failed to adequately claim that Sawant’s remarks were “of and concerning” them.</p> <p>Pechman based the dismissal on the fact that Sawant didn’t identify the officers by name when the council member decried the shooting during a rally five days afterward outside the Seattle Police Department.</p> <p>In the 28-page opinion issued Wednesday, the appeals court panel reversed Pechman’s ruling, holding that “Sawant’s own words suggested that her remarks were directed not only at the police generally, but also at the individual officers involved in the shooting.”</p> <p>While Sawant didn’t name them, the officers’ family, friends, colleagues and members of the public “knew that Plaintiffs were the officers involved in the shooting” and “plausibly ... understood that Sawant’s remarks were directed” at them, the panel ruled.</p> <p>As part of the ruling, the appeals court denied the officers’ request to have the case assigned to another judge, and sent the case back to Pechman’s court.</p> <p>Neither Sawant, who is named as a co-defendant with the city of Seattle, nor the city attorney’s office could be reached for comment over the weekend.</p>

Daniel Brown, an attorney representing the officers, said in an email his clients were “very pleased with the ruling from the 9th Circuit Panel, which was the correct one, and they look forward to having their day in court and having Ms. Sawant finally answer to the claims asserted against her in this matter.”

The two officers were surveilling a Wedgwood home in search of another man on Feb. 21, 2016, when Taylor arrived in a car, according to police and testimony at an inquest hearing into Taylor’s death.

One of the officers said he saw a handgun on Taylor’s hip. Taylor left the area, but when he returned later, the officers, in plain clothes and armed with a shotgun and a rifle, approached him after he had exited a car. The officers said they planned to arrest Taylor for being a felon in possession of a gun. The officers shot him, they said, when they saw him reach for what they believed was the gun.

But evidence developed during the inquest and through a civil lawsuit filed by Taylor’s family raised questions about whether Taylor was armed and why he would have been reaching for a gun he wasn’t carrying. The only weapon found at the scene, a handgun, was found under debris beneath the passenger seat of the vehicle Taylor had been in.

[The city settled the family’s lawsuit](#) in December 2020 for \$1.5 million.

The Police Department previously ruled the shooting fell within department policy and King County Prosecutor Dan Satterberg declined to file criminal charges against Spaulding and Miller, saying they perceived their lives were in danger as they tried to arrest Taylor. An inquest jury also found the two white officers believed Taylor, who was Black, posed a threat of death or serious injury when he was shot.

Spaulding and Miller first [filed their lawsuit in 2017](#), alleging Sawant’s statements damaged their reputations. The case was initially filed in state court but refiled in federal court the following year.

When she dismissed the officers’ third amended complaint last year, [Pechman said in her order](#) the officers had been given four chances, through amended pleadings and a previous appeal to the 9th Circuit appeals court, to prove their allegations but failed. Any further efforts, the judge said, would harm Sawant. In turn, Pechman dismissed the complaint with prejudice, meaning it could not be refiled.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Large events: vax proof or negative test
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/large-events-in-washington-state-now-require-proof-of-covid-vaccination-or-a-recent-negative-test/
GIST	<p>Concerts, sporting matches and other large events will now require proof of vaccination or a recent negative COVID-19 test for indoor events with 1,000 people or more, or for outdoor events with more than 10,000 people.</p> <p>Washington Gov. Jay Inslee’s mandate goes into effect Monday. Inslee announced the mandate last month after worries about rising COVID rates and specifically the impact of the more-contagious delta variant that threatened to overwhelm local hospitals.</p> <p>The order applies to everyone 12 and older. The requirement covers ticketed or registered events with defined entrances, not venues like shopping malls, museums or grocery stores that are open to the public.</p> <p>Masks at major events in the King County area have been mandatory since early September, but mask use and enforcement is disparate. Broadcasts of sporting events often show fans with masks slipped below their nose or with bare faces.</p> <p>Eventgoers must present proof of full vaccination status by showing their record card (or a photo of it), a printed certificate or screenshot from MyIRMobile.com or other immunization records from health providers. They also have the option of showing a negative test result that was taken within 72 hours of the</p>

	<p>event. Large events do not include those operated or managed at primary or secondary schools. The mandate excludes religious or faith-based groups.</p> <p>Shelly Tolo, president at Tolo Events, a Seattle-based event production company, is thankful the new mandate provides options for large events to take place rather than limiting the number of guests or shutting down events altogether.</p> <p>“At least with this mandate, we had a fairly good heads-up that something was going to be happening,” Tolo said. “It’s given [us] an opportunity to prepare.”</p> <p>Tolo said some clients are providing rapid testing or are having people preregister with their proof of vaccination or testing.</p> <p>In King County, 72.3% of the total population — or about 1.6 million people — have been fully vaccinated according to the most recent data from Public Health – Seattle & King County. At the state level, 60.8% of Washingtonians have been fully vaccinated.</p> <p>COVID cases have been on the decline in recent weeks, and officials are cautiously optimistic. In a recent interview with The Seattle Times, Inslee said that he is still deciding whether to mandate vaccines for school-age children, but added, “There is one clear thing that we know. We can get on top of this virus by getting vaccinated.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 NATO alarm: Russia troops near Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.bloombergquint.com/politics/nato-chief-calls-on-russia-to-avoid-escalation-near-ukraine
GIST	<p>(Bloomberg) -- The head of the NATO military alliance urged Russia to prevent any escalation in the wake of its build-up of forces near the border with Ukraine.</p> <p>“What we see is a significant, large Russian military build-up, we see an unusual concentration of troops and we know Russia has been willing to use these types of military capabilities before to conduct aggressive actions against Ukraine,” Jens Stoltenberg, secretary general of the 30-nation North Atlantic Treaty Organization, told reporters on Monday.</p> <p>“We call on Russia to be transparent on their military activities, to reduce tensions and to prevent any escalation,” Stoltenberg said after talks with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba in Brussels. “This is a clear message from all NATO allies.”</p> <p>The build-up of tanks and troops near the border with Ukraine has western capitals worried that Russian President Vladimir Putin could be planning a repeat of the 2014 invasion. In Moscow, senior officials and others close to the leadership say the Kremlin aims to make clear that any further western steps to provide weapons or expand military facilities in Ukraine would cross Russia’s red line.</p> <p>Stoltenberg declined to elaborate on the size or composition of the Russian deployment. “The fact that we see this military build-up also reduces any warning time between a decision in Russia before they’re able to conduct a military aggressive action against Ukraine,” Stoltenberg said.</p> <p>“What we currently see along the border is not a purely military build-up because Russia has already brought a military armada to our borders in spring and has never really withdrawn since,” Kuleba said. “What we see now is a deteriorating situation where Russia is demonstrating that it can quickly activate the already amassed troops and equipment and that every option including a military one is on the table.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Schools embrace testing over quarantine
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SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/schools-embrace-more-covid-19-testing-over-quarantine-to-keep-kids-in-class-11636972200?mod=hp_lead_pos5
GIST	<p>Grant Rivera spent 18 months struggling to conduct school safely during the pandemic before he stumbled upon an op-ed describing a way to keep children in class by testing them frequently for Covid-19.</p> <p>For Dr. Rivera, superintendent of Georgia's Marietta City Schools, a district northwest of Atlanta with roughly 8,700 students, the strategy was a revelation. Children exposed to a known Covid-19 case could be tested frequently and stay in school if they remained negative. Before then, students exposed to a known Covid-19 case were sent home for at least seven days if they tested negative on day 5.</p> <p>"Test-to-stay has been a collective sigh of relief," he said. "It is an option, whereas otherwise families had no option and staff had no option."</p> <p>As Covid-19 disruptions extend into a third academic year, implementation of in-school testing remains mixed. Some schools are making changes to Covid-19 protocols as students between 5 and 11 years of age start getting vaccinated. Some 900,000 children in that age range had received a first shot through Wednesday, the White House said.</p> <p>Some states and schools kicked off comprehensive testing programs during the previous school year, while others are starting to launch initiatives or have rejected the available resources. Setting up robust testing routines can be expensive and laborious, some schools have said. Some health departments and officials have been slow to roll out testing programs or to explain the benefits of in-school screening, said Sara Citrenbaum, co-director of Rapid Tests, a group that helps schools and businesses set up testing programs.</p> <p>"There does seem to be a disconnect between what's being offered and actual ground-level implementation," Ms. Citrenbaum said.</p> <p>Some public-health experts hope the test-to-stay model will encourage more schools and parents to adopt testing programs and help students stay in the classroom.</p> <p>"That's a game-changer," said Andrew Sweet, managing director of Covid-19 Response and Recovery at the Rockefeller Foundation, which works with health officials and schools to set up Covid-19 school testing programs.</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hasn't endorsed test-to-stay. In a statement, the agency called the practice promising and said it was evaluating it further. The CDC recommends that schools offer weekly screening testing for unvaccinated students and staff in the 98% of counties where transmission of Covid-19 remains moderate to high.</p> <p>Modeling studies and schools that piloted screening programs last school year found that regular testing of students and staff can reduce or eliminate in-school spread of the virus and help bolster confidence in school safety, said Divya Vohra, a senior researcher at the research firm Mathematica and author of a report on Covid-19 testing in schools that was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation.</p> <p>The Biden administration in October dedicated additional resources to help schools set up screening testing, including a partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation to connect schools with testing experts. In March, the administration committed \$10 billion in federal funding for Covid-19 school screening.</p> <p>Under most test-to-stay plans, children are tested for Covid-19 daily or every other day after contact with a positive case. Students are sent home only if a test comes back positive, rather than having students stay home for lengthy periods.</p> <p>The CDC recommends that unvaccinated students identified as a close contact quarantine for 14 days with the option to return 7 to 10 days after testing negative. The CDC says fully vaccinated people don't need to quarantine but should get tested 5-7 days after exposure to a positive case.</p>

In Massachusetts, test-to-stay has saved 85,000 school days this year for students who would have otherwise been in quarantine, according to a report from the state's department of education. More than 2,200 schools in the state have signed up for testing programs, including test-to-stay. Gov. Charlie Baker, a Republican, in October activated up to 200 National Guard members to help with Covid-19 testing in K-12 schools because there weren't enough staff members to conduct the tests.

In Georgia, Dr. Rivera said test-to-stay requires staff to set up in a church parking lot at 6 a.m. to administer rapid tests and to make 11th-hour phone calls to parents of children who have been identified as a close contact of a Covid-19 case, informing them that their children should come first thing in the morning to get tested. About one-third of students who come into contact with a known Covid-19 case participate in the program, he said, while students who don't must abide by previous testing and quarantine policies that keep them out of school longer. Obstacles include language barriers, scheduling around working parents and [navigating resistance to some Covid-19 safety measures](#), he said.

Since implementing test-to-stay in September, Marietta City Schools has recorded 186 Covid-19 positive cases. Some 15 of the cases were identified through the test-to-stay, five of which were determined to be false positives through follow-up PCR tests, a spokeswoman for the district said.

Chris Radding's daughter Crosby, a third-grader in the Marietta City school district, was dismayed at the prospect of being sent home for 10 days after she was identified as a close contact of someone who tested positive in October. Test-to-stay enabled her to remain in class, Mr. Radding said.

"My daughter's at an age where really you need that social interaction," Mr. Radding said. "Right now, especially with the pandemic, for a 9-year-old girl you certainly need that level of consistency in your life."

Dr. Rivera said test-to-stay feels like a step on the path back to normalcy after myriad setbacks during the pandemic.

"I will take the challenge of test-to-stay all day, every day and on Sunday if that means we have less challenges around quarantines, learning loss, trying to transition to virtual learning for kids who are quarantined and the toll it takes on staff," he said.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Inflation gobbling up pay raises
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/inflation-wages-raises-pace/
GIST	<p>A tight U.S. labor market is helping drive substantial raises for millions of Americans, with workers' typical hourly earnings jumping nearly 5% in the last year. The only problem? Inflation is not only erasing much or all of those gains, but pushing many workers into the red.</p> <p>Once inflation is accounted for — or "real wages" — average hourly earnings decreased 1.2% from October 2020 to October 2021, the Bureau of Labor Statistics said last week. Those wages represent income after accounting for the impact of rising prices and illustrate a person's actual purchasing power.</p> <p>By that measure, the typical American worker is worse off today than a year ago even though nominal pay — or income without any adjustments — is rising as fast as it has in years. But inflation is rising at an even steeper pace, with consumer prices increasing 6.2% in October from a year earlier. That represents the steepest monthly rise in about 30 years.</p> <p>For consumers, the challenge is that inflation is impacting a wide range of goods, from prices at the pump to food at the grocery store. In other words, it's difficult for most workers to avoid paying higher prices. Not surprisingly, Americans are souring on the nation's economic outlook, with more than 6 in 10 calling the economy poor, according to polling from the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.</p>

"Inflation is working against workers right now," Liz Wilke, principal economist at Gusto, a payroll company for small and midsize businesses, told CBS MoneyWatch.

That may be pushing some workers to shift jobs in what has come to be [called "The Great Resignation."](#) — a spike in the ranks of employees who are handing in their notice. Some are leaving the workforce to care for children, while others are starting their own businesses. But others may be quitting jobs to take higher-paying roles to offset pricier gas, food, rent and other costs, Wilke noted.

Where pay is beating inflation

Some employees are faring better, however: low-income workers in sectors such as retail, leisure and hospitality. For instance, employees in leisure and hospitality — people who work in restaurants and bars, for instance, saw their nominal hourly wages rise 11.2% over the last year, or well above the prevailing rate of inflation.

But people who work in the financial industry got a more modest 4.2% bump during the past year, which means their pay gains are failing to keep up with inflation.

To be sure, restaurant workers generally earn far less than financial industry employees, at about \$19 an hour compared with \$41 an hour for the latter. But people in the leisure and hospitality sector have actually gained purchasing power over the past year, compared with a loss for higher-paid workers.

That's creating what economist Arindrajit Dube at University of Massachusetts Amherst describes as a "Great Re-Compression," meaning that wages are rising rapidly for the nation's lowest-paid workers.

"The bottom 40% saw incredible growth in hourly earnings, surpassing price growth" between the second and third quarters of this year, Dube wrote on Twitter. "At the same time, those between the 50th and 80th percentile (call it the middle class) experienced wage growth below inflation levels."

The main reason? Restaurants, warehouses, transportation companies and others that employ lower-wage workers are increasingly competing for employees amid a [broader national labor shortage](#) triggered by the pandemic. This marks a reversal from the prior decade, when higher-paid professionals saw wage gains that far exceeded that of lower-paid workers.

"But the scale of this far surpasses anything from the past," Dube added.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Refugee admissions to focus on Afghans
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/afghan-evacuees-resettling-us-curtails-refugee-admissions/
GIST	<p>The U.S. government is curtailing admissions of refugees to focus on the massive effort to process and resettle tens of thousands of Afghan evacuees, the State Department said Monday.</p> <p>Through January 11, the U.S. will stop booking travel for refugees who don't qualify for certain exceptions. Refugees who need to reunite with family in the U.S., who are travel-ready, who have "urgent cases" or whose medical and security screenings are set to expire soon will continue to be resettled, the State Department said.</p> <p>The limits on refugee admissions were requested by the local nonprofit refugee resettlement agencies that partner with the government to help immigrants fleeing violence and war settle in American communities, two people familiar with the matter told CBS News.</p> <p>Since the late summer, the resettlement groups have been coalescing their efforts on assisting the more than 73,000 Afghan evacuees the U.S. has relocated to America after the Taliban reconquered Afghanistan.</p>

The effort, dubbed Operation Allies Welcome, has strained the resources of the nine national resettlement groups and their local affiliates, many of which closed down offices and reduced their personnel levels during the Trump administration, which dramatically slashed refugee admissions.

"This temporary prioritization of new bookings will allow Resettlement Agencies and community partners to provide necessary services to the Afghans that will be leaving U.S. safe havens in the coming weeks and months as well as to receive refugees already booked for travel in November and December," the State Department said in a statement.

Roughly 46,000 Afghan evacuees are currently living at eight military installations across the U.S. mainland that have been serving as temporary housing sites while officials prepare to relocate the newcomers to their respective destinations in America, the latest government figures show.

So far, 25,000 evacuees have departed the military sites, including 19,000 Afghans who have been resettled by the non-profit resettlement groups, according to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) figures.

"This temporary approach will help expedite the resettlement of Afghans from safe havens to their new communities," the State Department said, using the government's name for the military sites.

Another 2,600 people evacuated from Afghanistan are waiting for U.S.-bound flights at military bases in the Middle East and Europe, according to the DHS data.

Resettlement groups, many of which are faith-based, help refugees secure affordable housing, jobs and government benefits designed to facilitate their integration into American society.

The restrictions on refugee admissions, while temporary, will further complicate the U.S. government's efforts to fulfill President Biden's ambitious goal of resettling up to 125,000 refugees in fiscal year 2022, which started last month.

In October, the U.S. admitted 401 refugees, an 89% drop from [September](#), when nearly 3,800 refugees arrived in the country, [government data](#) show.

The admissions numbers don't include the tens of thousands of Afghan evacuees brought to the U.S. since the summer because they entered the country under a humanitarian process known as parole — not through the traditional refugee program.

The temporary refugee admissions restrictions will not apply to immigrants who assisted U.S. military forces and have Special Immigrant Visas, the State Department noted.

The Biden administration has faced difficulty rebuilding the U.S. refugee program, which was crippled by numerous Trump-era restrictions and the coronavirus pandemic.

In fiscal year 2021, which included the first eight full months of Mr. Biden's presidency, the U.S. resettled 11,411 refugees, an all-time low.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Connecticut nursing home Covid outbreak
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/connecticut-nursing-home-covid-19-outbreak-results-89/story?id=81188171
GIST	<p>A nursing home in Connecticut is recovering from a significant coronavirus outbreak, after 89 residents and staff tested positive for the virus, facility leadership reported Monday.</p> <p>The outbreak at Geer Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in North Canaan, Connecticut, began in late September. Eight residents with "serious underlying health issues" died as a result of the outbreak, nursing home leadership said in a statement.</p>

They said 78 residents and staff have since recovered since testing positive, and there are now only three active cases within the community of individuals living within the nursing home.

"We are encouraged to see only 3 active cases of covid-19 remaining within our nursing home. Of the total 67 residents affected over the course of this outbreak, 56 are fully recovered and off isolation. Sadly, we have lost 8 individuals with serious underlying health issues to Covid," Kevin O'Connell, the Geer Village Senior Community CEO, wrote.

Facility leaders said 87 of the 89 infected residents and staff were fully vaccinated, so leaders are "obviously concerned we experienced some level of waning immunity."

The outbreak occurred prior to boosters being made available, O'Connell told ABC News.

"We had it scheduled for Nov. 2, and then that got put aside because of the pandemic," O'Connell said, stressing that officials from the nursing home reached out to Walgreens "right away," when they were told that the booster was made available to residents.

However, O'Connell said that scheduling booster shots can be logistically complicated, because it entails coordinating it for all the staff and residents. "It takes a while to get that all set up," he said.

Booster shots will be made available to all eligible staff and residents when there are no new positive cases for two full weeks.

"We're following the guidance of the Department of Health," said O'Connell, "and they do not recommend providing booster to anybody with active infections for 14 days after the outbreak."

The CDC currently recommends that all individuals, 18 and older, who live in long-term care facilities, receive a COVID-19 booster shot, given the fact that residents are likely to live closely together, and are often older adults with underlying medical conditions, which cause them to be at "increased risk of infection and severe illness from COVID-19."

"We continue to monitor the situation closely and will provide updates for residents, staff, families and community stakeholders as the situation changes," officials from the home said over the weekend.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Ice: warming is changing the Arctic
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/correction-climate-arctic-hardest-hit-story-81188733
GIST	<p>While conducting research in Greenland, ice scientist Twila Moon was struck this summer by what climate change has doomed Earth to lose and what could still be saved.</p> <p>The Arctic is warming three times faster than the rest of the planet and is on such a knife's edge of survival that the U.N. climate negotiations underway in Scotland this week could make the difference between ice and water at the top of the world in the same way that a couple of tenths of a degree matter around the freezing mark, scientists say.</p> <p>Arctic ice sheets and glaciers are shrinking, with some glaciers already gone. Permafrost, the icy soil that traps the potent greenhouse gas methane, is thawing. Wildfires have broken out in the Arctic. Siberia even hit 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius). Even a region called the Last Ice Area showed unexpected melting this year.</p> <p>In the next couple of decades, the Arctic is likely to see summers with no sea ice.</p>

As she returns regularly to Greenland, Moon, a researcher with the U.S. National Snow and Ice Data Center, said she finds herself “mourning and grieving for the things we have lost already” because of past carbon dioxide emissions that trap heat.

But the decisions we make now about how much more carbon pollution Earth emits will mean “an incredibly large difference between how much ice we keep and how much we lose and how quickly,” she said.

The fate of the Arctic looms large during the climate talks in Glasgow — the farthest north the negotiations have taken place — because what happens in the Arctic doesn't stay in the Arctic. Scientists believe the warming there is already contributing to weather calamities elsewhere around the world.

“If we end up in a seasonally sea ice-free Arctic in the summertime, that’s something human civilization has never known,” said former NASA chief scientist Waleed Abdalati, a University of Colorado environmental researcher. “That’s like taking a sledgehammer to the climate system.”

What's happening in the Arctic is a runaway effect.

“Once you start melting, that kind of enhances more melt,” said University of Manitoba ice scientist Julianne Stroeve.

When covered with snow and ice, the Arctic reflects sunlight and heat. But that blanket is dwindling. And as more sea ice melts in the summer, “you’re revealing really dark ocean surfaces, just like a black T-shirt,” Moon said. Like dark clothing, the open patches of sea soak up heat from the sun more readily.

Between 1971 and 2019, the surface of the Arctic warmed three times faster than the rest of the world, according to the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program.

The result?

“The Arctic isn’t just changing in temperature,” Abdalati said. “It’s changing in state. It’s becoming a different place.”

The 2015 Paris climate agreement set a goal of limiting the warming of the Earth to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial temperatures, or, failing that, keeping it under 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit). The world has already gotten 1.1 degrees Celsius (2 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer since the late 1800s.

The difference between what happens at 1.5 degrees and 2 degrees can hit the Arctic harder than the rest of the world, University of Alaska Fairbanks climate scientist John Walsh, a member of the Arctic monitoring team. “We can save the Arctic, or at least preserve it in many ways, but we’re going to lose that if we go above 1.5.”

The Arctic itself has blown past 2 degrees Celsius of warming, Stroeve said. It’s approaching 9 degrees Celsius (16 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming in November, she said.

For John Waghiyi Jr., the Arctic is not a number or an abstraction. It’s been home for 67 years, and he and other native Bering Sea elders have watched the Arctic change because of warming. The sea ice, which allows humans and polar bears to hunt, is shrinking in the summer.

“The ice is very dangerous nowadays. It’s very unpredictable,” said Waghiyi of Savoonga, Alaska. “The ice pack affects us all, spiritually, culturally and physically, as we need to have it in order to keep harvesting.”

The ice is “at the core of our identity,” said Dalee Sambo Dorough, international chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, representing 165,000 people in several nations.

	<p>This isn't just a problem for people living in the Arctic. It spells trouble for regions much farther south.</p> <p>An increasingly large number of studies link Arctic changes to alterations of the jet stream — the river of air that moves weather from west to east — and other weather systems. And those changes, scientists say, can contribute to more extreme weather events, such as floods, drought, the February Texas freeze, or more severe wildfires.</p> <p>Also, the melting of ice sheets and glaciers can add considerably to rising sea levels.</p> <p>“The fate of places like Miami are tied very closely to the fate of the Greenland,” said David Balton, director of the U.S. Arctic Executive Steering Committee, which coordinates U.S. domestic regulations involving the Arctic and deals with other northern nations. “If you live in Topeka, Kansas, or if you live in California. If you live in Nigeria, your life is going to be affected. ... The Arctic matters on all sorts of levels.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Experts wanted more from climate pact
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/scientists-skeptical-alive-15-temperature-limit-81167915
GIST	<p>GLASGOW, Scotland -- While world leaders and negotiators are hailing the Glasgow climate pact as a good compromise that keeps a key temperature limit alive, many scientists are wondering what planet these leaders are looking at.</p> <p>Crunching the numbers they see a quite different and warmer Earth.</p> <p>“In the bigger picture I think, yes, we have a good plan to keep the 1.5-degree goal within our possibilities,” United Nations climate chief Patricia Espinosa told The Associated Press, referring to the overarching global goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times.</p> <p>United Kingdom Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the conference host, agreed, calling the deal a “clear road map limiting the rise in global temperatures to 1.5 degrees.”</p> <p>But many scientists are far more skeptical. Forget 1.5 degrees, they say. Earth is still on a path to exceed 2 degrees (3.6 Fahrenheit).</p> <p>“The 1.5C goal was already on life support before Glasgow and now it’s about time to declare it dead,” Princeton University climate scientist Michael Oppenheim told The Associated Press in an email Sunday.</p> <p>A few of the 13 scientists the AP interviewed about the Glasgow pact said they see just enough progress to keep alive the 1.5-degree Celsius limit — and with it, some hope. But barely.</p> <p>The optimists point to many agreements that came out of Glasgow, including a United States-China deal to work harder together to cut emissions this decade, as well as separate multi-nation agreements that target methane emissions and coal-fired power. After six years of failure, a market-based mechanism would kick-start trading credits that reduce carbon in the air.</p> <p>The 1.5-degree mark is the more stringent of two targets from the historic 2015 Paris climate accord. United Nations officials and scientists consider it key because a 2018 scientific report found dramatically worse effects on the world after 1.5 degrees.</p> <p>The world has already warmed 1.1 degrees (2 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial time, so this is really about a few tenths of a degree more. The United Nations calculated that to limit warming to 1.5 degrees, countries need to cut their emissions in half by 2030. Emissions are now going up, not down, by about 14% since 2010, Espinosa said.</p>

German researcher Hans-Otto Portner said the Glasgow conference “got work done, but did not make enough progress.”

“Warming will by far exceed 2 degrees Celsius. This development threatens nature, human life, livelihoods, habitats and also prosperity,” said Portner, who co-chairs one of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change scientific reports the United Nations relies on.

Instead of big changes in bending the temperature curve as the United Nations had hoped for from Glasgow, they got only tiny tweaks, according to scientists who run computer simulations.

“Heading out of Glasgow we have shaved maybe 0.1C off of warming ... for a best-estimate of 2.3C warming,” Breakthrough Institute climate scientist and director Zeke Hausfather said in an email. Hausfather has done climate modeling with colleagues for Carbon Brief.

MIT professor Jon Sterman said his Climate Interactive team crunched some preliminary numbers after the Glasgow deal came out and it didn’t match leaders’ optimism.

“There is no plausible way to limit warming to 1.5 or even 2 (degrees) if coal is not phased out ... and as rapidly as possible, along with oil and gas,” he said.

On Saturday, India got a last-minute change to the pact: Instead of the “phase out” of coal and fossil fuel subsidies, the subsidies are to be “phased down.” Several of the scientists said that regardless of what the deal says, coal needs to end, not just decrease, to lessen future warming.

“‘Lessening’ will do less to slow the harmful effects of climate change than ‘eliminating,’” former NASA chief scientist Waleed Abdalati, an environmental researcher at the University of Colorado, said in an email.

Before the pact was finished, Climate Action Tracker, which also analyzes pledges to see how much warming they would lead to, said emission-cut pledges would lead to 2.4 degrees of warming.

The 1.5 figure “is balanced on a knife edge,” said tracker scientist Bill Hare of Australia.

One paragraph in the pact — which calls on countries whose emission-cutting goals aren’t in line with 1.5- or 2- degree limits to come back with new stronger goals by the end of next year — gives hope, Hare said.

But U.S. climate envoy John Kerry said Saturday night that paragraph probably doesn’t apply to the United States, the second-largest coal emitter and the largest historically, because the U.S. goal is so strong.

Jonathan Overpeck, a climate scientist who is dean of the University of Michigan’s environment school said the pact provided “watered down hope. ... We got an incomplete plan for slower action.”

“I went into the (conference) thinking 1.5C was still alive, and it appears the world’s leaders just didn’t have the backbone for that,” Overpeck said in an email.

Some progress was made, said University of Illinois climate scientist Donald Wuebbles, one of the key authors of the U.S. national climate assessment. “But the probability of getting to 1.5 degrees is much reduced, even to the point of almost being impossible. Even being able to get to 2 degrees is less likely.”

But some scientists held out hope.

“For the first time, I can really see a potential path forward to limiting warming to 1.5C,” Pennsylvania State University climate scientist Michael Mann said in an email. “But it will require both (a) countries making good on their current pledges and (b) further ratcheting up their current commitments.”

Johan Rockström of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact and Research in Germany highlighted the “optimistic” scenario he and a few others see if all the countries that have promised net-zero emissions by mid-century actually achieve the goal — something most haven’t started concrete action on.

In that case, warming could be limited to 1.8 degrees or 1.9 degrees, Rockström said.

“That is a significant progress, but far from sufficient,” he said.

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HEADLINE	11/15 France, Russia talk: Belarus tension
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/eu-set-add-airlines-belarus-sanctions-list-81174447
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS -- French President Emmanuel Macron and Russian leader Vladimir Putin talked on the phone Monday about the need for de-escalating the tensions around the growing migrant pressure on the European Union's borders with Belarus, Marcon's office said.</p> <p>In the almost two-hour talk, they also agreed upon the “need for a humanitarian effort for the migrants” but did not announce any concrete steps, according to the Elysee statement.</p> <p>The EU says Moscow has a role in building the migration pressure and could actively help in easing it.</p> <p>The Kremlin's account of the conversation said Putin informed Macron about his contacts with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and “emphasized the necessity of discussing the problems that had arisen directly between the leaderships of the EU countries and Belarus.”</p> <p>Putin also noted “the extremely harsh treatment of refugees by Polish border guards,” according to the Kremlin. Polish forces are blocking people from entering Poland and are pushing back to Belarus those migrants who cross the border.</p> <p>Also Monday, Lukashenko spoke on the phone with Germany’s outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel for 50 minutes about “the situation with refugees on the Belarusian-Polish, Belarusian-Lithuanian and Belarusian-Latvian borders,” according to Belarusian state news agency Belta.</p> <p>They discussed “ways and prospects of resolving” the crisis and preventing its escalation, as well as humanitarian aid to the migrants, Belta said.</p> <p>The calls took place as the EU ratcheted up pressure on Belarus by agreeing to slap sanctions on airlines accused of helping Lukashenko wage a “hybrid attack” against the entire bloc using migrants.</p> <p>The EU is also calling for humanitarian aid as up to 4,000 migrants are stuck in makeshift camps in freezing weather in Belarus while Poland has reinforced its border with 15,000 soldiers, in addition to border guards and police. The EU has expressed solidarity with Poland's guarding the bloc's external border. At least 11 migrants have died in recent weeks.</p> <p>Polish authorities said Monday that Belarusian services had led a large group of migrants to a border crossing with Poland and made them believe they would be transported by bus to Germany. Polish police broadcast messages across the border telling the migrants that “they have been deceived.”</p> <p>“The Belarusian side is deliberately escalating the situation,” said Marcin Przydacz, a deputy foreign minister. “The situation is unprecedented and unpredictable.”</p> <p>Belarus' borders with Poland, Lithuania and Latvia are also the eastern borders of both the EU and NATO. The EU says Lukashenko's authoritarian regime has for months invited migrants to the Belarusian capital of Minsk, many of them Iraqis, Afghanis and Syrians, with the promise of helping them across the border.</p>

Meanwhile, Lithuanian officials said they were seeing a rising number of attempts by migrants to cross its border from Belarus.

The 27-country EU has already imposed four sets of sanctions on Belarus authorities and senior officials over the disputed election last year that returned Lukashenko to office and his government's brutal crackdown on peaceful protesters. Opposition leaders and Western nations have described the vote as a sham.

The EU is preparing a fifth lot of sanctions on Belarus. On Monday the bloc's foreign ministers extended the scope of those measures to add airlines, travel agents and others accused of helping to bring migrants to Minsk.

"Today's decision reflects the determination by the European Union to stand up to the instrumentalization of migrants for political purposes. We are pushing back on this inhuman and illegal practice," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said.

EU headquarters said the bloc will now be able to target individuals and entities organizing or contributing to activities by the Lukashenko regime that "facilitate illegal crossing" of the EU's external borders.

In Washington, U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price said the administration of President Joe Biden was also "preparing follow-up sanctions in close coordination with the EU and other partners and allies that will continue to hold the Lukashenko regime accountable for its ongoing attacks on democracy, on human rights on international norms."

The EU believes Lukashenko began luring migrants to Belarus as a retaliatory measure to destabilize the bloc, which has been deeply divided over how to manage migration since well over 1 million people entered the bloc in 2015.

Germany allowed in hundreds of thousands of people that year, but doesn't want to encourage more now.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas was asked in Brussels if he would support Germany taking in people now on the Belarusian side of the border if the flow of migrants to Belarus is stopped.

He replied: "No. I would argue for the people who are there, who were brought there under false pretenses by the Lukashenko regime, being taken back to their countries of origin, and for the countries of origin to take their share of the responsibility."

German federal police said Monday that they registered 1,708 unauthorized entries to the country "with a connection to Belarus" in the first 14 days of November, bringing the total this year so far to 9,549.

Also Monday, the United Arab Emirates banned travelers from several Middle Eastern countries from boarding flights to Belarus, cutting off one of the last major air routes for would-be migrants. Most airlines with flights to Minsk now say that won't allow Iraqis, Syrians or Afghans to travel there.

Lukashenko, meanwhile, brushed aside the threat of fresh sanctions.

"We will defend ourselves. That's it, there's nowhere to retreat further," he was quoted as saying by the state news agency Belta.

Lukashenko once again denied that his government organized the migrant influx, saying that "it isn't worth the effort," and he insisted the migrants are resisting Belarusian efforts to encourage them to return home.

Belarus flag carrier Belavia is among the airlines likely to be hit, and Maas warned other companies to follow the example of Turkish Airlines by restricting flights to the Belarus capital.

	He warned of a possibility of denial of overflight rights and landing permission in Europe.
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HEADLINE	11/15 Migrants stuck at Belarus, Poland border
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/migrants-stranded-belarus-border-standoff-polish-police/story?id=81177901
GIST	<p>Hundreds of migrants moved to a crossing point on the border between Belarus and Poland on Monday, encouraged by Belarusian security forces in what Poland's government said was another attempt by Belarus' authorities to exacerbate the migration crisis there.</p> <p>Over 2,000 migrants, mostly from the Middle East, have been trapped in a makeshift camp at the border since last week, caught up in what European Union countries say is an effort by Belarus' authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko to orchestrate a humanitarian crisis on its borders.</p> <p>On Monday, hundreds of migrants packed up their belongings and moved toward the border crossing point itself at the Polish town of Kuznica in another attempt to cross. Polish guards in riot gear again blocked their path and the crowds halted.</p> <p>Videos released by Poland's authorities showed hundreds of people sitting on the road at the crossing in front of a razor-wire barrier and Polish police.</p> <p>"An attempt is being made to force the border through, all under the supervision of Belarusian services," Poland's border service wrote on Twitter.</p> <p>Belarus' Lukashenko is accused of luring thousands of migrants to Belarus over recent months and funneling them to the border with Poland and neighboring Lithuania, in a form of retaliation against those countries for supporting Belarus' pro-democracy movement that came close to toppling him last year.</p> <p>Poland and Lithuania have blocked the migrants, and hundreds of people have become trapped in the forests along the border, often for weeks in freezing temperatures and without food.</p> <p>The campaign blew up into a major European crisis last week after Belarus marched the 2,000 migrants up to the border close to Kuznica. For seven days, the migrants have been living in the open air in a makeshift camp pressed up against the border's razor-wire fence and blockaded by dozens of Polish police and border troops.</p> <p>Polish authorities over the weekend had accused Belarus of preparing to stage a fresh attempt to escalate the standoff at the border.</p> <p>Activists from Polish refugee rights groups that have been providing humanitarian aid to migrants in the woods also accused Belarusian authorities of spreading misinformation to encourage the migrants to try to cross in the hope of inciting clashes.</p> <p>"For several days now we have witnessed the migrants being subjected to a professionally prepared disinformation action," Grupa Granica, an umbrella group for the activists said in a statement Sunday. It accused Belarus' authorities of telling the migrants false information that Germany and Poland were preparing to settle them.</p> <p>"This suggests attempts at raising the migrants' hopes for a safe passage to western European countries, to then keep them in the camp at the Polish border, all in order to exert further pressure on the EU,' the group said.</p> <p>A Syrian man in the camp on Sunday told ABC News people there believed the EU on Monday would consider a plan for evacuating them, something that is not true.</p>

	<p>The man, who asked to be identified as Yousef, said Belarusian guards had stopped handing out food and firewood on Sunday, in what he believed was an attempt to make people desperate.</p> <p>"They are trying to make people crazy," he said by phone. Yousef said he and nine Syrians with him had not eaten for four days and that they had been trapped in the forest for nearly a month.</p> <p>"They treat us like animals," he said.</p> <p>Belarus has blamed the crisis on Poland and European countries, accusing them of failing to observe human rights.</p> <p>EU foreign ministers were meeting on Monday for a planned summit where it was expected they will announce expanded sanctions against Belarusian individuals and entities involved in the migration crisis.</p> <p>The EU has been seeking to cut off the flow of migrants to Belarus by threatening sanctions against airlines flying them there. Those efforts appear to have borne some fruit in recent days.</p> <p>Turkish Airlines has announced it will no longer fly Iraqi, Syrian and Yemeni citizens from Istanbul to Belarus' capital Minsk, and the Syrian carrier Cham Wings Airlines has also said it is halting its flights.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Atmospheric river: floods, evacuations
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/heavy-nw-rains-bring-flooding-evacuations-school-closures-81185389
GIST	<p>BELLINGHAM, Wash. -- Days of heavy rainfall and high winds Monday coming from an atmospheric river — a huge plume of moisture extending over the Pacific and into the Northwest — in Washington state caused extensive flooding and mudslides that forced evacuations and closed schools and part of Interstate 5.</p> <p>The National Weather Service issued flood warnings for several rivers around Western Washington, which has seen nearly ceaseless rain for about a week. Strong winds also hit the region Monday. Gusts pushed 60 mph (96 kph) in multiple places, including a gust of 58 mph (93 kph) at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.</p> <p>More than 158,0000 customers were without power in Western Washington at one point Monday afternoon.</p> <p>Later Monday, Gov. Jay Inslee declared a severe weather state of emergency in 14 Western Washington counties and said the state Emergency Management Division, with support from the Washington National Guard, would coordinate all incident-related assistance.</p> <p>A state of emergency for the town of Hamilton was declared Sunday. People there, about 80 miles (129 kilometers) northeast of Seattle, were urged to evacuate.</p> <p>Cars and trailers were packed into the parking lot outside the Red Cross evacuation site at Hamilton Baptist Church, where dozens of residents are waiting out the storm, the Skagit Valley Herald reported.</p> <p>Skagit County officials were comparing this flood to severe flooding in 2009, when the Skagit and Samish rivers overflowed and caused damage to homes, farms and infrastructure,</p> <p>As the water made its way down the Skagit River, people were warned to expect flooding in Sedro-Woolley, Burlington and Mount Vernon. City officials in Mount Vernon on Monday afternoon recommended people living west of the Division Street Bridge evacuate because of the threat of potential significant flooding overnight.</p>

Just south of the Canadian border in Sumas, Washington, officials said city hall was flooded and that the flooding event was looking like one not seen since 1990.

“At this point in time there is no reasonably safe way to drive to Bellingham without putting yourself or others at risk. Please do not drive through standing or rushing water,” the city's police department said via Twitter.

Nicole Postma, who owns a coffee stand in Sumas and is president of the Sumas Chamber of Commerce, told The Bellingham Herald Monday that people are nervous.

“We knew that the flood was imminent, but had no idea it would be like this,” she said.

Southwest of Sumas, deputies using a Whatcom County Sheriff's Office rescue vehicle were evacuating stranded residents in the Everson area, officials said on Twitter.

Bellingham experienced record rainfall Sunday with a one-day total of 2.78 inches (7 centimeters), crushing the prior daily record from 1998 at 0.88 inches (2.2 centimeters), according to the National Weather Service.

All schools in the Bellingham, Washington, district and nearby districts were closed Monday because of dangerous travel conditions. Mudslides closed part of Interstate 5 just south of Bellingham Monday afternoon with three cars stuck in the debris.

No one was seriously injured and the interstate was later shut in both directions overnight because of flooding and active slides, state Trooper Rocky Oliphant said on Twitter.

Caylon Coomes of Bellingham drove his truck and paddle board from his home near Lake Whatcom earlier on Monday to some flooded city streets near the interstate.

“It looked pretty good out there (by the lake) but the street looks a little bit better,” he said. He met another man in a parking lot and donning wetsuits they waded into the water and paddled away past vehicles stuck in the floodwaters.

On the Olympic Peninsula, several highways were closed in places and the U.S. Coast Guard helped local authorities evacuate people west of Forks, Washington. The agency said on Twitter there were about 10 people in danger and that no injuries had been reported.

A semitrailer truck tipped in heavy winds on the Deception Pass bridge and was leaning on the railing Monday, state troopers said. The driver was able to get out, according to the state patrol.

Emergency officials warned that people should expect to see water in low-lying roadways and should turn around rather than drive through water on the road. That water can be moving swiftly and be deeper than it seems, posing serious risk to people in vehicles.

Forecasters say conditions should improve by Tuesday after parts of the region have seen more than 6 inches (15 centimeters) of rain in the past several days.

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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	11/16 Nigeria crypto-traders go underground
SOURCE	https://news.trust.org/item/20211116045814-u4276/

ILORIN, Nigeria, Nov 16 (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - Adebayo Sulaimon was just getting ready for the day when officers from the Nigerian Police Force raided the 23-year-old graduate's compound in the southwestern town of Ilorin to arrest him and his roommate.

Sulaimon's crime, police told him as they took him away that October morning, was trading cryptocurrency, something he had started doing a month before the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) stepped up its efforts to ban the practice in February.

After spending five hours at a local police station and paying a 120,000 naira (\$290) bail, Sulaimon and his roommate were released - then went straight back to buying and selling digital currency.

"There were no jobs, nothing to do. We had to look for (ways) to eat. I trade cryptocurrency and I use it to survive, not as a side hustle," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Citing concerns that cryptocurrencies can be used for money laundering, terrorism financing and other illegal activities, Nigeria has joined the growing list of countries - including China, Russia and Turkey - to tightly [restrict or prohibit trading in bitcoin](#) and other volatile digital currencies.

But traders and crypto experts say the ban has only pushed the industry underground, with Nigerians trading between themselves using mobile messaging apps and established but unregulated platforms like Binance and Paxful, opening them up to high fees and scams.

"The ban has been ineffective," said Kunbi Ademola, a lawyer focused on the tech industry, now based in Britain.

"But it has exposed a lot more young people to fraud ... (peer-to-peer) is not as secure as the direct exchanges that you could do before on the cryptocurrency exchanges."

The latest ban, which reinforces restrictions that have been in place since 2017, mandates all banks and financial institutions in Nigeria to close down the accounts of any customer or entity trading crypto or operating local exchanges.

The move makes it almost impossible to deposit or withdraw any cryptocurrency, essentially crippling the exchange platforms that traders use to buy and sell the currency.

Last month, Nigeria also became the first African nation to release its own digital currency, the eNaira, in a step some crypto experts and users believe is meant to quell the use of cryptocurrency.

"I do not consider eNaira to be in the league of cryptocurrency or an e-currency," said Enoch Daniels, a Nigerian crypto trader.

"eNaira still carries the aim of centralized finance, where what you can own is measured and limited," he added.

The CBN did not respond to several requests for comment.

BUCKING THE BAN

Nigerians traded \$400 million-worth of cryptocurrency last year, putting the country behind only the United States and Russia in volume of bitcoin trading, according to research group Statista.

For young Nigerians like Sulaimon, cryptocurrency offers a chance for income and opportunity amid a freefalling economy, skyrocketing inflation and [more than 30% unemployment](#).

"Young Nigerians would rather invest and transact with cryptocurrencies that are less regulated than the naira with its heavy regulations," said Patrick, a bank worker who declined to give his last name due to his employer's restrictions on speaking to the press.

While trading without financial protections has its risks, it can also bring rewards, he said, noting that some cryptocurrencies can see gains of 150,000%, turning traders into U.S.-dollar millionaires.

The new restrictions have done little to stifle crypto's popularity in Africa's most populous nation.

In March 2021, just after the central bank's announcement, the dollar volume of cryptocurrencies sent from Nigeria rose to \$132 million, up 17% from the previous month, research firm Chainalysis said.

Transactions in June were [25% above the same month last year](#).

Traders say the ban has led to a jump in harassment and extortion of young people by the police, who arrest traders under the new law and ask for bribes to release them.

"We have not received any official complaints on the alleged extortion of young persons over issues of cryptocurrency in Ilorin, to the best of my knowledge," said Okasanmi Ajayi, spokesperson for the Kwara State Police.

"The police would rather arrest and prosecute (people) than turn it into a money-making venture," he said.

The government's move has also opened the door to scammers who see Nigeria's fast-growing, unregulated crypto industry as an easy pay day, traders say.

In September, Francis Ugochukwu tried to buy 2.6 million naira-worth of tether, a digital currency pegged to the U.S. dollar, through a WhatsApp digital market, [known as an escrow group](#).

Designed to give traders at least some level of protection, the groups are run by administrators who act as intermediaries, holding onto the money for a transaction between strangers until they get confirmation that the cryptocurrency coins - or tokens - have been handed over.

"I paid for it. I was expecting my tokens and I did not get them," said Ugochukwu, who asked to use a pseudonym to protect his privacy.

Escrow groups have long been considered trustworthy, but Ugochukwu and other users say they are increasingly being set up with the express purpose of defrauding traders.

"Twenty minutes later, still nothing. I immediately knew that I had been scammed," he said, adding that when he tried to call the administrator, her number was no longer working.

DIGITAL CURRENCY UNDER CONTROL

While cryptocurrency is designed to work outside formal banking systems and experiences wild swings in value, Nigeria's new eNaira is controlled by the CBN and maintains a value equivalent to the national currency.

Leaders said the country's official digital currency will expand access to banking, enable more remittances and even [grow the economy by billions of dollars](#).

But early glitches and malfunctions, such as problems with registration and slow response from the app, mean uptake has been slow.

Which means many young Nigerians still rely on crypto trading to make a living, with the ban pushing them into what Ademola, the tech lawyer, describes as a precarious grey market.

"People are losing their means of income in many instances, especially people who are not professional in the industry," he said.

HEADLINE	11/15 Prosecutors: Facebook deleted evidence
SOURCE	https://www.businessinsider.com/prosecutors-say-facebook-deleted-crucial-evidence-on-a-militia-group-2021-11
GIST	<p>Prosecutors said Facebook deleted crucial evidence when it shut down the accounts of a New Mexico militia group during a crackdown on extremist groups, The Washington Post reported.</p> <p>In August 2020, Facebook announced the New Mexico Civil Guard was removed from the platform.</p> <p>Business Insider's Charles Davis previously reported that the right-wing vigilante group's leaders include "a neo-Confederate with a swastika tattoo and a self-styled 'national anarchist' with a history of denying the Holocaust."</p> <p>The Post reported that in June 2020, a group of men dressed in military-style camouflage confronted a group protesting a statue of a Spanish conquistador in Albuquerque, when one protester was shot and wounded.</p> <p>The outlet reported that prosecutors accused the New Mexico Civil Guard of starting the violence even though the alleged shooter was not a member of the militia group.</p> <p>On Monday, Bernalillo County District Attorney Raul Torrez filed a petition in California, where the social media network is based, asking a judge to force Facebook to hand over information about accounts created by the militia.</p> <p>Prosecutors want information that could help them identify members of the group, Torrez said at a news conference on Monday.</p> <p>"Facebook is asking Congress and the American people to trust it to regulate extremist content on its platform and yet refuses to turn over basic account information about an identified extremist group that used that same platform to recruit, organize and direct its members to engage in unlawful activity," he said in a statement.</p> <p>Facebook said they don't have that information since they removed the accounts, but have not signed a sworn affidavit to say they are unable to retrieve it, the Post reported.</p> <p>"We find it hard to believe that a trillion-dollar company would be in a position where they would have deleted this information and have no way to retrieve it," Torrez said on Monday</p> <p>During the press conference, Torrez said if Facebook does delete all the information on extremist groups then it "begs the question of how Facebook intends to prevent members of this extremist group from opening new accounts in the future."</p> <p>Facebook did not respond to Insider's request for comment at the time of publication but Andy Stone, Facebook's policy communications director, told the Post that the company has ways for prosecutors to get information if they make requests in a timely manner.</p> <p>"We preserve account information in response to a request from law enforcement and will provide it, in accordance with applicable law and our terms, when we receive valid legal process," Stone said. "When we preserve data, we do so for a period of time, which can be extended at the request of law enforcement."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Holiday gifts lacking privacy features
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/peloton-bike-amazon-halo-band-and-samsungs-galaxy-watch-4-featured-on-mozilla-list-for-holiday-gifts-lacking-privacy-features/

Mozilla has [released](#) the latest edition of its *Privacy Not Included shopping guide, aiming to provide holiday buyers with a concrete list of how the most popular items handle privacy issues.

Mozilla researchers spent over 950 hours examining 151 popular connected gifts, identifying 47 that had what they called "problematic privacy practices." The worst, according to Mozilla, include Facebook Portal, Amazon Echo, NordicTrack Treadmill and other workout tools.

Not all of the products examined were bad, and Mozilla found that about 22 did a good job of protecting user privacy by not collecting, selling, or sharing data. These devices ranged from the iRobot Roomba to the Garmin Venu and Apple Homepod Mini.

The researchers sought to figure out whether items had cameras, microphones or location tracking features as well as any other tools that collected data on users. Mozilla also examined whether devices used encryption or forced users to have strong passwords.

Jen Caltrider, *Privacy Not Included lead researcher, told ZDNet that while gadgets may be getting smarter, they are also getting creepier and far more prone to security lapses and data leaks -- even among leading companies like Microsoft, Amazon and Facebook.

"We also found that consumers continue to shoulder way too much of the responsibility to protect their own privacy and security. Consumers are asked to read complicated documents scattered across multiple websites to even begin to understand how their data is being used," Caltrider said.

"Smart exercise equipment stood out as especially problematic. Consumers buy equipment like a Peloton bike or a NordicTrack treadmill to work out in the privacy of their own homes. Unfortunately, there seems to be little privacy with these devices."

Many of the most problematic devices came from companies notorious for lackluster privacy features, including [Amazon](#) and [Facebook](#). The Facebook Portal was spotlighted as an extraordinarily dangerous device because it routinely sends data collected by its AI-powered smart camera and microphone back to Facebook.

Mozilla researchers said Amazon's Echo Dot for Kids -- which can be used for reading children bedtime stories -- tracks information about children. The e-reader Onyx Boox doesn't have any privacy policy at all.

Apple was commended by the researchers because they do not share or sell any of the data they collect, while Garmin's fitness watches protect users' personal data. The Sonos One SL speaker was also praised for being built without a microphone.

Mozilla leveled harsh criticism at home exercise equipment companies like Peloton, NordicTrack, Tonal, and SoulCycle, all of which collect extraordinary amounts of personal information and routinely sell it as a way to make money.

"The NordicTrack Treadmill is especially problematic: They can sell your data, call or text your phone number even if you're on a do-not-call list, and may collect data from data brokers to target you with ads," Mozilla said.

The report notes that because of privacy laws passed in California, many companies have added sections specifically governing those that live in the state. But many companies have no privacy policy at all or make it difficult to find and hard to read.

"Major culprits include Kwikset, Amazfit, Ubtech, Onyx Boox, Fi Series 2, and Whistle pet trackers. Amazon's Alexa is everywhere. That makes us nervous. Amazon Alexa is embedded in numerous products, including ones that Amazon doesn't manufacture," Mozilla explained.

	"That concerns us because Alexa and Amazon retain records of Alexa interactions. Even if you ask Amazon to not collect personal data on their kids, they say they still might collect some data. And Alexa Skills seem to be problematic in its oversight/privacy."
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HEADLINE	11/15 China Telecom seeks court to overturn ban
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/china-telecom-requests-court-to-overturn-us-ban-report/
GIST	<p>China Telecom has reportedly gone to court in a bid to reverse the United States Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) decision to revoke the company's authorisation to operate in the country.</p> <p>The FCC issued an order for China Telecom to stop providing domestic and international services in late October in response to recommendations from the Trump-era Justice Department.</p> <p>"China Telecom Americas, a US subsidiary of a Chinese state-owned enterprise, is subject to exploitation, influence, and control by the Chinese government and is highly likely to be forced to comply with Chinese government requests without sufficient legal procedures subject to independent judicial oversight," the FCC said in its order.</p> <p>"China Telecom Americas' ownership and control by the Chinese government raise significant national security and law enforcement risks by providing opportunities for China Telecom Americas, its parent entities, and the Chinese government to access, store, disrupt, and/or misroute US communications, which in turn allow them to engage in espionage and other harmful activities against the United States."</p> <p>The order is set to take effect on December 4, unless it is stayed or revoked.</p> <p>According to Reuters, China Telecom told the US Appeals Court for the District of Columbia on Monday that the revocation of its authorisation would cause irreparable harm to its business, reputation, and relationships.</p> <p>It also reportedly claimed that the FCC had no evidence of the company being a national security or law enforcement risk.</p> <p>China Telecom's argument is similar to the one used by Xiaomi at the start of the year when it requested to be removed from the Department of Defense's official list of Communist Chinese military companies (CCMC). In those legal proceedings, Xiaomi said the CCMC designation would cause "immediate and irreparable harm to Xiaomi", including cutting Xiaomi's access to US capital markets.</p> <p>The US courts eventually went on to rule in favour of Xiaomi, with Defense agreeing to remove the designation and allow the company to operate in the country.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Data: best ransomware response
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/ransomware-response-data/176360/
GIST	<p>Ransomware has become part of the cost of doing business, and driving down that cost can be the difference between recovery and catastrophe.</p> <p>A data analysis from Fox-IT, part of NCC Group, offers some best practices for how to minimize the fallout of a ransomware attack, after creating a dataset of 700 ransomware negotiations which occurred between 2019 and 2020.</p> <p>Once breached, the researchers explain the optimal response is none, but of course, that's a luxury most victims can't afford.</p>

Fox-IT cybersecurity analyst Pepijn Hack and Zong-Yu Wu, a threat analyst with the company, explained that when negotiation is the only choice, there are strategies to affect the best possible outcome.

“There is a negative sentiment in our society towards paying or negotiating with criminals, and the legitimacy and ethics of it are also questionable to say the least,” the report said. “Nonetheless, we realize that a significant percentage of companies currently do end up paying the ransom demand.”

Ransomware Econ 101

Ransomware groups already know how much their victims can afford to pay, the data shows. Their business model depends on them knowing how potentially lucrative a target might be and how likely a company is to pay.

“First and the most importantly, the total profit is not only influenced by the amount of ransom they demand from the victim,” the researchers wrote. “It also depends on whether the victim decides to pay, and the costs of the operation.”

Costs to ransomware groups can include fees to launder extorted cryptocurrency, [ransomware-as-a-service](#) fees and commissions, and the cost of carrying out the attack itself, according to the report.

“The results show that the adversaries operating behind the dataset we collected knew how much ransom a victim is willing to pay before the negotiation had started,” the analysts explained. “Another interesting observation is that smaller companies generally pay more from a rate-of-return point of view. In other words, a smaller company pays less in absolute amount but higher in percentage of their revenue.”

How to Negotiate with Ransomware Groups

The clock starts as soon as you click on the link provided by the [ransomware group](#), the researchers warn. So, it’s critical for the organization’s staff to pull together a cohesive plan before starting the countdown. What is the breach? What is the best outcome for the organization? Who is responsible for communicating internally and externally? These are all questions that are fundamental to answer before proceeding, according to the firm.

The researchers also advised anyone under attack to get the adversaries to switch communications to a secured channel immediately.

“The first thing any company should do is try to set up a different means of communication with the adversary and if they do not want to switch, they should realize their communication is not private,” the researchers added. “It happened multiple times that during a negotiation a chat got infiltrated by third parties who started interfering and disturbing the negotiation.”

The next tip might be tough, but the report warned that being rude or mistreating the threat actor isn’t in the organization’s best interests.

Be Professional, Ask for More Time

“We have seen multiple examples of companies getting frustrated and angry in conversations with threat actors resulting in chats being closed,” they wrote. “Look at the ransomware crisis as a business transaction. Hire outside help if needed but stay professional.”

The attacker will likely try to rush the victims and force them into acting quickly, the report said. Targets should ask for more time if they need it — in almost all situations examined by Fox-IT, attackers granted their request for a deadline extension.

“This can be helpful for several reasons. In the beginning of the process, you will need time to assess the situation and rule out any possibilities of restoring your data,” the report said. “Similarly, it can give

you extra time to produce different strategies. If you decide to pay in the end, you will need to make arrangements to acquire the right cryptocurrency.”

Other strategies include offering a smaller amount than demanded soon, with a promise for later and more flat-out trying to convince the ransomware group there’s no money to pay.

The researchers also warned that a target shouldn’t tell anyone if there is [cyberinsurance coverage](#).

“Although a company could still tell the adversary that the insurance company is not willing to pay, this limits the options for any negotiation severely,” the report said.

Other tips the report provides for those negotiating with a ransomware attacker are asking for a test file to be decrypted, proof files have deleted and a full explanation of how the attackers pulled off the breach.

Even with those assurances, there’s no way for a target to know their files won’t be leaked or sold, the researchers added.

“Even if they properly deleted your files, who’s to say any of the other people in the chain did not quickly make a copy of some interesting files for ‘personal usage.’”

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HEADLINE	11/15 SharkBot: Android Trojan targets banks
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2021/11/sharkbot-new-android-trojan-stealing.html
GIST	<p>Cybersecurity researchers on Monday took the wraps off a new Android trojan that takes advantage of accessibility features on the devices to siphon credentials from banking and cryptocurrency services in Italy, the U.K., and the U.S.</p> <p>Dubbed "SharkBot" by Cleafy, the malware is designed to strike a total of 27 targets — counting 22 unnamed international banks in Italy and the U.K. as well as five cryptocurrency apps in the U.S. — at least since late October 2021 and is believed to be in its early stages of development, with no overlaps found to that of any known families.</p> <p>"The main goal of SharkBot is to initiate money transfers from the compromised devices via Automatic Transfer Systems (ATS) technique bypassing multi-factor authentication mechanisms (e.g., SCA)," the researchers said in a report.</p> <p>"Once SharkBot is successfully installed in the victim's device, attackers can obtain sensitive banking information through the abuse of Accessibility Services, such as credentials, personal information, current balance, etc., but also to perform gestures on the infected device."</p> <p>Masquerading as a media player, live TV, or data recovery apps, SharkBot, like its other malware counterparts TeaBot and UBEL, repeatedly prompts users with rogue pop-ups to grant it wide permissions only to steal sensitive information. Where it stands apart is the exploitation of accessibility settings to carry out ATS attacks, which allow the operators to "auto-fill fields in legitimate mobile banking apps and initiate money transfers from the compromised devices to a money mule network controlled by the [threat actor]."</p> <p>The modus operandi effectively obviates the need for enrolling a new device to perform fraudulent activities, while also bypassing two-factor authentication mechanisms put in place by the banking applications.</p> <p>In addition, the malware comes with all features now observed across all Android banking trojans, such as the ability to perform overlay attacks to steal login credentials and credit card information, intercept legitimate banking communications sent through SMS, enable keylogging, and obtain full remote control of the compromised devices.</p>

	<p>SharkBot is also notable for the steps it takes to evade analysis and detection, including running emulator checks, encrypting command-and-control communications with a remote server, and hiding the app's icon from the home screen post-installation. No samples of the malware have been detected on the official Google Play Store, implying that the malicious apps are installed on the users' devices either via sideloading or social engineering schemes.</p> <p>The discovery of SharkBot in the wild shows "how mobile malwares are quickly finding new ways to perform fraud, trying to bypass behavioural detection countermeasures put in place by multiple banks and financial services during the last years," the researchers said.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 NKorea campaign on security researchers
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/apt/cryptocurrency-also-a-likely-target-in-north-korean-campaign-on-security-researchers
GIST	<p>North Korea's continued campaign to breach cybersecurity researchers puts it in a position to capitalize on high-impact research and cutting-edge training materials to leverage for future attacks. It's also a chance to steal their wallets, note cybersecurity experts following the campaign.</p> <p>Last week, ESET reported on Twitter that "trojanized" versions of the malware reverse-engineering research tool Ida Pro used known North Korean infrastructure. It appears to be the same group who targeted researchers using social engineering in January, through fake social media profiles set up for a sham company.</p> <p>"By targeting researchers the attackers can gain access to sensitive information such as information about vulnerabilities, exploits, private tools, training material, etc.," Anton Cherepanov, the ESET researcher who first noticed the Ida Pro gimmick, told SC Media via email.</p> <p>"[But]," he added, "some of the victims of the original attack back in January claim that attackers were looking for bitcoin wallets."</p> <p>That included Richard Johnson, an original target of the attack in January, who tweeted that the actors seemed to target credentials and cryptocurrency wallets.</p> <p>The Hermit Nation is a unique beast in cyberspace. On the one hand, it has traditional espionage operations. On the other, it has been perhaps the predominant player in state-sanctioned grand larceny, using cybercrime to compensate for lost revenue due to sanctions — most famously, the SWIFT banking heist against Bangladesh and the WannaCry ransomware fiasco. Operatives are also known to freelance their hacking skills for other enterprises, according to a DHS release in April of last year.</p> <p>Since the Ida Pro gambit reused known infrastructure, it likely would only ensnare researchers who lack enterprise security around their security research, noted Greg Lesenwich, a threat intelligence analyst with Recorded Future.</p> <p>That said, Cherepanov said he believed skilled researchers could still miss the tampering; the software functioned as normal.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Scam spotter campaign flags gift card fraud
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/scam-spotter-campaign-gift-card/
GIST	<p>A cyber-safety platform has found a humorous way to warn the American public how to spot a gift card scam ahead of the holiday season.</p> <p>ScamSpotter.org has made a series of amusing videos in which some of the ridiculous storylines deployed by gift card scammers are played out by actors.</p>

In one Hollywood blockbuster-style dramatization, a grandmother steals a helicopter and breaks into a jail in a foreign country to set her granddaughter free using gift cards as a bail payment.

In another, a man narrowly averts a raid on his home by armed police after paying his outstanding taxes over the phone with gift cards.

Other ads use the scamming tactics “your computer’s been hacked,” “you’re pre-approved for a loan,” and “it’s your boss – I need you to buy gift cards ASAP.”

A spokesperson for the Scam Spotter platform said: “This comprehensive campaign highlights the most common gift card scam scenarios in a series of absurd and hyperbolic videos to show that if the stories scammers use sound unbelievable, it’s because they are.”

Despite the implausibility of the scenarios deployed by gift card scammers, their efforts are frequently met with success.

The Federal Trade Commission [said](#) in December 2020 that gift cards have topped the list of reported fraud payment methods every year since 2018. During that time, people reported losing a total of nearly \$245m, with a median individual loss of \$840.

Gift card scams take in victims of all ages. “While baby boomers tend to lose more money per scam on average, younger generations are far from safe, with millennials reporting losses of around \$300m in 2020,” said a Scam Spotter spokesperson.

Scam Spotter predicts that 2021 will be a bumper year for gift card scamming as holiday shoppers seek to overcome product shortages and supply-chain issues by choosing gift cards over other presents.

Global branded payments provider Blackhawk Network, in its 2021 Holiday Shopping Forecast, predict that this year gift card spending will increase by [27%](#).

Jenny Grounds, CMO of [Cybercrime Support Network](#), said: “Scammers love gift cards because they are untraceable, and there’s no way to recover the money once a scammer has the card details.”

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HEADLINE	11/15 Flaws open Zoom meetings to intercept
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/vulnerabilities-attackers-spy-your-zoom-meetings/
GIST	<p>The cybersecurity researchers at Positive Technologies identified three vulnerabilities in several critical apps part of the Zoom video conferencing platform (both apps and tools). These include Zoom Virtual Room Connector, Zoom Meeting Connector Controller, and Zoom Recording Connector.</p> <p>These vulnerabilities could have allowed hackers to intercept your Zoom meetings and target customer infrastructure. It is worth noting that Zoom’s video conferencing app is currently quite popular in the USA, with around 42.8% of the market share.</p> <p><i>Details of Vulnerabilities and Affected Versions</i></p> <p>The three vulnerabilities are tracked as CVE-2021-34414, CVE-2021-34415, and CVE-2021-34416. Exploiting these flaws, an attacker could have executed arbitrary code on the server using root-user privileges. The following on-premise Zoom apps are reportedly vulnerable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting Connector Controller up to version 4.6.348.20201217• Meeting Connector MMR up to version 4.6.348.20201217• Recording Connector up to version 3.8.42.20200905• Virtual Room Connector up to version 4.4.6620.20201110• Virtual Room Connector Load Balancer before version 2.5.5495.20210326.

The second vulnerability encourages complete system crashes and would allow attackers to compromise the software's functionality and make it difficult for the impacted organization to hold Zoom conferences.

This error was identified in the Zoom On-Premise Meeting Connector Controller app, and the bug was eliminated in version 4.6.358.20210205.

The third vulnerability would allow attackers to enter specific commands. It was identified in the following apps:

- Meeting Connector up to version 4.6.360.20210325
- Meeting Connector MMR up to version 4.6.360.20210325
- Recording Connector up to version 3.8.44.20210326
- Virtual Room Connector up to version 4.4.6752.20210326
- Virtual Room Connector Load Balancer up to version 2.5.5495.20210326

Possible Dangers

[According to](#) Positive Technologies' researcher Egor Dimitrenko, who identified the flaws, these app process Zoom's traffic from all conferences. In case these are compromised, the intruder could perform a Man-in-the-Middle attack. This could allow them to intercept data from almost any conference in real-time.

Since the impacted apps operate on the company's corporate network's outer perimeter, apart from allowing the attackers to disrupt Zoom's conference holding capabilities, the vulnerabilities may allow attackers to invade the company's network.

Once there, the attackers could execute commands to launch an attack, gain server access with escalated privileges. This is very concerning because most of Zoom's clients are large companies.

How Could The Flaws be Exploited?

Dimitrenko explained that the flaws require an attacker to obtain login credentials of a user having administrative rights, which isn't a huge challenge because Zoom hasn't yet implemented a strict password policy. This means the company doesn't offer protection against password predictions via the web interface.

"You can often encounter vulnerabilities of this class in apps to which server administration tasks have been delegated. This vulnerability always leads to critical consequences and, in most instances, it results in intruders gaining full control over the corporate network infrastructure," Dimitrenko noted.

Vulnerabilities are Patched

Zoom Video Communications was notified about the three flaws, and the company has already patched them in the affected apps, including conferences, recordings, and negotiations. Therefore, if you are using Zoom make sure it is updated to the latest version.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Threat actors hijack Alibaba ECS
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/alibaba-ecs-instances-actively-hijacked-by-cryptomining-malware/
GIST	<p>Threat actors are hijacking Alibaba Elastic Computing Service (ECS) instances to install cryptominer malware and harness the available server resources for their own profit.</p> <p>Alibaba is a Chinese technology giant with a global market presence, with its cloud services being used primarily in southeast Asia.</p>

In particular, the ECS service is marketed as offering fast memory, Intel CPUs, and promising low-latency operations. Even better, to protect against malware such as cryptominers, ECS comes with a pre-installed security agent.

Hackers remove ECS security agent to install miners

According to a report by Trend Micro, one of the issues with Alibaba ECS is the lack of different privilege levels configured on an instance, with all instances offering root access by default.

This makes it possible for threats actors who gain access to login credentials to access the target server via SSH as root without any preparatory (escalation of privilege) work.

"The threat actor has the highest possible privilege upon compromise, including vulnerability exploitation, any misconfiguration issue, weak credentials or data leakage," explains Trend Micro's [report](#).

Furthermore, these elevated privileges allow the threat actors to create firewall rules that drop incoming packets from IP ranges belonging to internal Alibaba servers to prevent the installed security agent from detecting suspicious behavior.

The threat actors can then run scripts that stop the security agent on the compromised device.

Given how easy it is to plant kernel module rootkits and cryptojacking malware due to the elevated privileges, it is no surprise that multiple threat actors compete to take over Alibaba Cloud ECS instances.

Trend Micro has also observed scripts looking for processes running on specific ports commonly used by malware and backdoors and terminating the associated processes to remove competing malware.

Another ECS feature exploited by the actors is an auto-scaling system that enables the service to automatically adjust computing resources based on the volume of user requests.

This is to help prevent service interruptions and hiccups from sudden traffic burdens, but it's an opportunity for cryptojackers.

By abusing this when it's active on the targeted account, the actors can scale up their Monero mining power and incur additional costs to the instance owner.

Considering that the billing cycles are monthly in the best-case scenario, it would take the victim some time to realize the problem and take action.

When auto-scaling isn't available, mining will cause a more immediate and noticeable slow-down effect as the miners utilize the available CPU power.

All cloud services should be vetted

Alibaba ECS is yet another case of a cloud service targeted by cryptominers, with other notable recent campaigns [targeting Docker](#) and [Huawei Cloud](#).

Trend Micro has notified Alibaba of its findings but hasn't received a response yet.

If you are using Alibaba's cloud service, ensure that your security settings are correct and follow best practices.

Moreover, avoid running apps under root privilege, use cryptographic keys for access, and follow the principle of least privilege.

	In the case of ECS, its built-in malware protection isn't enough, so adding a second layer of detection for malware and vulnerabilities on the cloud environment should be part of your standard security practice.
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HEADLINE	11/15 Emotet malware botnets back via TrickBot
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/emotet-malware-is-back-and-rebuilding-its-botnet-via-trickbot/
GIST	<p>The Emotet malware was considered the most widely spread malware in the past, using spam campaigns and malicious attachments to distribute the malware.</p> <p>Emotet would then use infected devices to perform other spam campaigns and install other payloads, such as the QakBot (Qbot) and Trickbot malware. These payloads would then be used to provide initial access to threat actors to deploy ransomware, including Ryuk, Conti, ProLock, Egregor, and many others.</p> <p>At the beginning of the year, an international law enforcement action coordinated by Europol and Eurojust took over the Emotet infrastructure and arrested two individuals.</p> <p>German law enforcement used the infrastructure to deliver an Emotet module that uninstalled the malware from infected devices on April 25th, 2021.</p> <p>Emotet returns after law enforcement operation</p> <p>Today, researchers from Cryptolaemus, GData, and Advanced Intel have begun to see the TrickBot malware dropping a loader for Emotet on infected devices.</p> <p>While in the past, Emotet installed TrickBot, the threat actors are now using a method dubbed "Operation Reacharound" to rebuild the Emotet botnet using TrickBot's existing infrastructure.</p> <p>Emotet expert and Cryptolaemus researcher Joseph Roosen told BleepingComputer that they had not seen any signs of the Emotet botnet performing spamming activity or found any malicious documents dropping the malware.</p> <p>This lack of spamming activity is likely due to the rebuilding of the Emotet infrastructure from scratch and new reply-chain emails being stolen from victims in future spam campaigns.</p> <p>The Emotet research group Cryptolaemus has begun analyzing the new Emotet loader and told BleepingComputer that it includes new changes compared to the previous variants.</p> <p>"So far we can definitely confirm that the command buffer has changed. There's now 7 commands instead of 3-4. Seems to be various execution options for downloaded binaries (since its not just dlls)," Cryptolaemus researchers told BleepingComputer.</p> <p>Advanced Intel's Vitali Kremez has also analyzed the new Emotet dropper and warned that the rebirth of the malware botnet would likely lead to a surge in ransomware infections.</p> <p>"It is an early sign of the possible impending Emotet malware activity fueling major ransomware operations globally given the shortage of the commodity loader ecosystem," Kremez told BleepingComputer in a conversation.</p> <p>"It also tells us that the Emotet takedown did not prevent the adversaries from obtaining the malware builder and setting up the backend system bringing it back to life."</p> <p>Samples of the Emotet loader dropped by TrickBot can be found at Urlhaus.</p>

	<p>Kremetz told BleepingComputer that the current Emotet loader DLL has a compilation timestamp of "6191769A (Sun Nov 14 20:50:34 2021)."</p> <p>Defending against the new Emotet botnet</p> <p>Malware tracking non-profit organization Abuse.ch has released a list of command and control servers utilized by the new Emotet botnet and strongly suggests network admins block the associated IP addresses.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the new Emotet infrastructure is growing rapidly, with over 246 infected devices already acting as command and control servers.</p> <p>Network administrators are strongly advised to block all associated IP addresses to prevent their devices from being recruited into the newly reformed Emotet botnet.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 FBI: fake email a software misconfiguration
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/application-security/fbi-attributes-fake-email-from-its-account-to-software-misconfiguration-
GIST	<p>The FBI on Saturday responded to a report flagged by Spamhaus of phony emails coming from the agency's actual @ic.fbi.gov domain, calling the incident a result of a software misconfiguration on its Law Enforcement Enterprise Portal (LEEP), from which the FBI communicates with state and local law enforcement.</p> <p>The emails, which warned of a fake cyberattack, were sent on Nov. 12, and Spamhaus reported early the next morning that the messages indeed were fake: "We have been made aware of "scary" emails sent in the last few hours that purport to come from the FBI/DHS. While the emails are indeed being sent from infrastructure that is owned by the FBI/DHS (the LEEP portal), our research shows that these emails *are* fake," Spamhaus tweeted.</p> <p>The FBI on Saturday confirmed that the emails came from one of its LEEP servers, it was not part of the agency's corporate email system. "No actor was able to access or compromise any data or [personally identifiable information] on the FBI's network. Once we learned of the incident, we quickly remediated the software vulnerability, warned partners to disregard the fake emails, and confirmed the integrity of our networks."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Troubling rise: internet access brokers
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities-threats/the-troubling-rise-of-internet-access-brokers
GIST	<p>A recent discovery of three separate threat groups using the same infrastructure to carry out a range of malicious activity has focused fresh attention on the growing role of so-called initial access brokers (IABs) in the underground cybercrime economy.</p> <p>IABs are threat groups that typically break into a target network and then sell access to that network to the highest bidder in Dark Web markets. In some instances, they might simply facilitate the sale of access to a compromised network by providing middleman services.</p> <p>Security experts consider such operators as a growing threat because they allow cybercriminals —of almost any caliber — to get on a network quickly and with little effort of their own. Just like IaaS providers allow legitimate organizations to scale operations relatively easily, IABs are giving threat actors the ability to steal data, deploy ransomware, and distribute malware without having to worry about reconnaissance and initial intrusion activity.</p> <p>"[The business model] resembles a relationship that a legitimate business organization would call 'channel partners'," says Eric Milam, vice president of research and intelligence at BlackBerry,</p>

which recently discovered one such IAB that it is now tracking as Zebra2104. "It has been said before how much cybercrime organizations often operate like regular businesses. This is another facet of the legitimate business world that they have adopted, simply because it works so well."

BlackBerry security analysts stumbled on Zebra2104's operation recently when conducting research for a book. The company's researchers observed a domain that they had encountered in a previous threat hunt and decided to investigate further.

The effort showed that two ransomware groups — MountLocker and Phobos — and another cyber-espionage-motivated advanced persistent threat group called StrongPity had separately used the same infrastructure in their campaigns at various points. Telemetry that BlackBerry's [researchers unearthed and analyzed](#) showed that Zebra2104 had provided the initial access into victim environments to each threat group.

"The threat groups used the infrastructure in differing ways," Milam says. The operators of Mount Locker and Phobos used the infrastructure that Zebra2104 provided to deploy Cobalt Strike Beacons and their namesake ransomware for financial gain. The StrongPity gang, meanwhile, deployed its own namesake malware primarily to steal data.

"To the best of our knowledge, the threat groups did not use the compromised networks at the same time, as this would not make sense from a logistical standpoint," Milam says.

BlackBerry researchers were not able to determine how the three disparate threat groups managed to conceal their campaigns from the victim organizations. It's also unclear if Zebra2104 gained access to the compromised environment itself or if it was a middleman between parties. If it had indeed been the one to break into the environment, the initial access could have happened in any of multiple ways, including via spear-phishing, compromised or weak passwords, vulnerability exploits, or a malicious insider.

One thing that BlackBerry researchers discovered was that the infrastructure to which Zebra2104 was selling access has strong ties to a malicious spam campaign that Microsoft [reported](#) earlier this year. "It is likely that this is a key factor in gaining initial access, as phishing represents one of the largest initial infection vectors for threat actors today," Milam says.

Growing Popularity

Digital Shadows, which has been tracking IABs since 2016, earlier this year [reported](#) an increase in the use of IABs among cybercriminals. The company attributed the growing popularity to the sharp increase in relatively weakly protected remote access networks and virtual private networks since the COVID-19 pandemic forced a shift to a more distributed work environment.

Digital Shadows found that IABs most frequently offered compromised Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP) systems and VPNs as initial access points for their customers. In the third quarter of 2021, the [average price](#) that IABs charged for access to a compromised VPN was \$1,869 — up from \$1,446 previously. For RDP systems, the average price was \$1,902. IABs most frequently provided access to networks belonging to organizations in the retail, technology, and industrial goods and services sectors.

"Initial access brokers have become a mainstay of cybercriminal activity, and this has coincided with the trend of global cybercrime becoming more streamlined and efficient," says Chris Morgan, threat intelligence analyst at Digital Shadows. He predicts that IAB levels observed in the third quarter of this year will likely either continue or increase into fourth quarter and into 2022.

Morgan says the type of threat actors purchasing IAB listings are diverse, but the biggest users are ransomware groups. "The majority of IAB listings will likely only provide access to a subset of systems and servers" on a victim network, he says. However, buyers almost always will get a consistent and stable access point into the target's network, in which the actor can then establish persistence and move laterally.

	<p>"The listing will be highly dependent on a number of factors, which include the targeted company's architectural design and security principles in use -- including network segmentation and access management," Morgan notes.</p> <p>The prices that IABs charge are influenced by several factors, including an organization's size and the type of information that could be accessed from its network. In some cases, prices are tied to the annual revenue of a company — the higher the revenue, the higher the initial access cost.</p> <p>"For VPN and RDP," Morgan says, "the IAB will typically sell a credential pairing of a username and password, along with a specific IP port."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 RedDoorz: Singapore largest data breach
SOURCE	https://www.straitstimes.com/tech/tech-news/59m-customers-of-reddoorz-hotel-booking-site-leaked-in-spores-largest-data-breach?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>SINGAPORE - The personal data of nearly 5.9 million Singaporean and South-east Asian customers of hotel booking site RedDoorz was found to have been leaked, in what the Government has called Singapore's largest data breach.</p> <p>The Personal Data Protection Commission (PDPC) has fined local firm Commeasure, which operates the website, \$74,000.</p> <p>This is much lower than the combined \$1 million fine imposed on SingHealth and Integrated Health Information Systems for the 2018 data breach which affected 1.5 million people.</p> <p>The commission said it had considered hardship on the hospitality sector caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>"In deciding the amount of financial penalty to be imposed, we also considered that the organisation, which operates in the hospitality industry, had been severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic," said the PDPC in a judgment issued last Thursday (Nov 11).</p> <p>"This is the largest data breach that has occurred since the Personal Data Protection Act came into effect."</p> <p>RedDoorz said last year that most of the compromised data came from the booking platform's largest market, Indonesia. The company's customers are all from South-east Asia.</p> <p>It is understood that about 9,000 of the affected people are from Singapore.</p> <p>The maximum fine for a data breach is \$1 million now under the Act, which came into force in 2013.</p> <p>But firms can soon be fined more - up to 10 per cent of their annual turnover in Singapore or \$1 million, whichever is higher. The higher fine is slated to take effect at least 12 months from Feb 1 this year.</p> <p>The affected data in the Commeasure incident included the customer's name, contact number, e-mail address, date of birth, encrypted password to his RedDoorz account and booking information.</p> <p>As customer passwords were encrypted, the hackers will not be able to use them unless they find a way to decode the passwords. This reduces the likelihood of the crooks being able to use the passwords to hack into victims' RedDoorz accounts.</p> <p>The hackers did not access or download customers' masked credit card numbers.</p>

However, with the other personal details breached, cyber criminals might be able to pose as the victims and try to take over other online accounts that use similar details, going by what cyber-security experts have said in other incidents.

It also means that the victims could be targeted by more spam messages and phishing attempts.

The stolen data was put up for sale on a hacker forum before it was taken down, reported The Business Times last year.

Commeasure found out about the breach on Sept 19 last year, after an American cyber-security firm alerted the company.

PDPC was notified on Sept 25.

The hackers had likely accessed the company's database hosted on an Amazon cloud database after getting an Amazon Web Services access key.

This key was embedded in an Android application package (APK) created by Commeasure in 2015 and publicly available for download from the Google Play store.

The package is used by Google's Android operating system to distribute and install mobile apps. The APK in question here is for installing the RedDoorz app.

The move by Commeasure to include the access key in the APK is against Amazon Web Service's advice to not embed access keys directly into code.

Commeasure wrongly labelled the access key in the APK as a "test key" too. The APK was also eventually regarded as "defunct" by the company. Even so, it could still be downloaded from Google Play and was only removed after the data breach was discovered.

Since the APK was considered defunct, it was left out when Commeasure engaged a cyber-security company to conduct a security review and tests from September to December 2019.

A security tool that could have prevented the hackers from getting the access key was also not used on the APK since it was considered defunct.

All the developers, except one of the organisation's co-founders and the chief technology officer, have since left the company.

PDPC said that had the company examined this APK or the access key, the data breach could have been prevented.

"The organisation's failure to include the affected APK and the... access key within the scope of the security review arose because of the organisation's negligence to include them in its inventory of IT assets in production," said the commission.

PDPC added that it was not satisfied that the IT security reviews that Commeasure conducted were sufficiently rigorous and met standards under the law.

In arriving at the \$74,000 fine, the commission said it also considered factors such as the actions Commeasure took to address the incident. These included only allowing white-listed Internet Protocol addresses to access its live databases and having two-factor authentication in place for all the tools and accounts used by developers.

PDPC also said although the company conducted periodic security reviews, these efforts were futile since the affected APK was not included.

	Commeasure informed affected customers on Sept 26 last year of the breach and advised them to change their RedDoorz account passwords as a precaution and avoid using the same passwords on other online platforms.
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HEADLINE	11/15 Researchers: Intel chip flaw enable attacks
SOURCE	https://www.helpnetsecurity.com/2021/11/15/intel-chip-flaw-cve-2021-0146/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>Researchers uncovered a vulnerability in Intel Processors that could affect laptops, cars and embedded systems. The flaw (CVE-2021-0146) enables testing or debugging modes on multiple Intel processor lines, which could allow an unauthorized user with physical access to obtain enhanced privileges on the system.</p> <p>What's vulnerable? This problem has been discovered in the Pentium, Celeron and Atom processors of the Apollo Lake, Gemini Lake and Gemini Lake Refresh platforms, which are used in both mobile devices and embedded systems.</p> <p>The threat affects a wide range of ultra-mobile netbooks and a significant base of Intel-based IoT systems, from home appliances and smart home systems to cars and medical equipment.</p> <p>According to a study by Mordor Intelligence, Intel ranks fourth in the IoT chip market, while its Intel Atom E3900 series IoT processors, which also contain the CVE-2021-0146 vulnerability, are used by car manufacturers in more than 30 models, including, according to unofficial sources, in Tesla's Model 3.</p> <p>Vulnerability score The bug, which received a score of 7.1 on the CVSS 3.1 scale, was identified by Mark Ermolov, Dmitry Sklyarov (both from Positive Technologies) and Maxim Goryachy (an independent researcher).</p> <p>“One example of a real threat is lost or stolen laptops that contain confidential information in encrypted form,” says Mark Ermolov. “Using this vulnerability, an attacker can extract the encryption key and gain access to information within the laptop. The bug can also be exploited in targeted attacks across the supply chain. For example, an employee of an Intel processor-based device supplier could, in theory, extract the Intel CSME firmware key and deploy spyware that security software would not detect. This vulnerability is also dangerous because it facilitates the extraction of the root encryption key used in Intel PTT (Platform Trust Technology) and Intel EPID (Enhanced Privacy ID) technologies in systems for protecting digital content from illegal copying. For example, a number of Amazon e-book models use Intel EPID-based protection for digital rights management. Using this vulnerability, an intruder might extract the root EPID key from a device (e-book), and then, having compromised Intel EPID technology, download electronic materials from providers in file form, copy and distribute them.”</p> <p>According to Ermolov, the vulnerability is a debugging functionality with excessive privileges, which is not protected as it should be. To avoid problems in the future and prevent the possible bypassing of built-in protection, manufacturers should be more careful in their approach to security provision for debug mechanisms.</p> <p>To fix the discovered vulnerability, install the UEFI BIOS updates published by the end manufacturers of the respective electronic equipment (notebooks or other devices).</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Twitter vigilantes hunt crypto scammers
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/twitters-crypto-vigilantes-are-just-getting-started/
GIST	EARLY LAST MONTH , a jargon-laden post by a pseudonymous Twitter handle set off a storm in the cryptocurrency world.

The account called itself Gabagool.Ξth (a blend of references to the *The Sopranos* and the [Ethereum](#) blockchain) and featured a fuchsia nebula as a profile picture. It called out what it saw as foul play in decentralized finance, or DeFi—a galaxy of [blockchain](#)-based apps providing cryptocurrency lending and exchange services. Creators of DeFi protocols often foster user loyalty by staging “airdrops”: distributions of cryptocurrency tokens rained down unannounced on users who have deposited a certain amount of cryptocurrency on the network. In May, a service called Ribbon carried out such an airdrop, doling out 30 million Ribbon tokens to 1,620 wallets. The tokens were designed so that they could not be cashed out until October 8.

On October 8, Gabagool spotted something suspicious. A cluster of 36 wallets that had received the Ribbon tokens had swiftly exchanged them for the popular ether cryptocurrency, then transferred the ether to one cryptocurrency wallet. Gabagool thought that the person or people behind that wallet had likely created the 36 Ribbon accounts shortly before the airdrop, to maximize their chance of getting tokens. By Gabagool’s calculations, the wallet to which they were transferred accrued at least 652 ether, valued at \$2.3 million at the time. “I thought, ‘OK, this person kind of gamed the airdrop,’” the man running the Gabagool handle tells me in a phone call.

That kind of chicanery is not unusual in cryptocurrency trading, a sphere where fake identities and sock puppets abound. Then Gabagool discovered *who* owned the wallet: By cross-referencing the address with information from Twitter and crypto-wallet register ENS Domains, Gabagool concluded it belonged to Bridget Harris, a junior employee at Divergence Ventures, a San Francisco-based venture capital firm that has invested in over 50 cryptocurrency projects—including Ribbon.

Gabagool saw that as dishonest. He wondered whether, as a Ribbon backer, Divergence Ventures might have had advance knowledge of the airdrop and then used that intel to milk millions out of it by converting the Ribbon tokens to ether. “They attempted to exploit that information to extract profit, and they did so while publicly stating to be very bullish and excited about Ribbon,” he says, comparing the actions to insider trading. Gabagool distilled his information in a tweet, which “kind of blew up” as soon as he fired it off, he says.

Divergence Ventures denied insider knowledge about the airdrop but later [admitted](#) to “crossing a line”; it eventually returned the ether to Ribbon. In the wake of the incident, [reference](#) to the Ribbon investment disappeared from Divergence Ventures’ website. Divergence Ventures did not reply to a request for comment, and Harris did not reply to several requests for an interview via Twitter.

Gabagool is among an emerging breed of sleuths bent on spotting, tracking down, and exposing questionable practices in the budding DeFi world. Cryptocurrency is intended as electronic money that users can exchange anonymously and without intermediaries. But that anonymity comes with transparency: Cryptocurrency transactions are inscribed in an open digital ledger, the blockchain, which provides a record of how assets flow through the system. Companies such as Chainalysis and Elliptic have created software to aid law enforcement investigations into illicit activities involving cryptocurrency. In contrast, these new amateur detectives rely on their hunches and tips from others, use free tools to examine blockchain activity, and broadcast their findings from pseudonymous Twitter accounts like Gabagool, [Zach](#), and [Sisyphus](#). Gabagool says he noticed the questionable Ribbon activity while poring over Etherscan, a tool to keep track of blockchain transactions. He and other sleuths say they are animated by a penchant for investigative work, resentment, or frustration with the brazenness of some people in the space. They say they are trying to save DeFi from itself—by becoming its sheriffs.

DeFi is arguably the wildest recess of cryptocurrency’s Wild West. Its advocates cast it as a happy digital island where investors have eliminated financial middlemen to interact on a peer-to-peer basis. Practically, it can at times resemble the digital equivalent of touring Las Vegas high on LSD. DeFi protocols are often run as decentralized autonomous organizations: online-only operations that claim to be managed collectively by users rather than by a C-suite. Most DAOs provide financial services via self-executing software programs, which users can mix and combine to devise unique trading strategies. New shiny crypto-tokens are constantly launched, generally on the Ethereum blockchain; users earn tokens as interest by parking cryptocurrency on a decentralized exchange, or just by [playing videogames](#).

Non-fungible tokens, or NFTs—cryptographic stand-ins for memes and pieces of digital art—are sometimes [accepted as collateral](#) for cryptocurrency loans.

Even as other corners of the cryptocurrency world edge toward the mainstream, this fast-moving, nihilistic mirror-world of precious tokens and runaway meme-coins remains largely beyond the purview of regulators—as the overall value of the cryptocurrency invested in DeFi platforms has surpassed [\\$250 billion](#), according to data aggregator Defi Llama. Predictably, DeFi is rife with behaviors that would be considered questionable elsewhere. There are exit scams, or “rug-pulls,” where the creator of a DeFi project absconds with users’ cryptocurrency, as well as more nuanced “white collar” misdeeds, like [promoting a project without disclosing](#) payments from its creators, or exploiting connections and influence to gain an unfair advantage on the market.

According to Zach, another Twitter-based sleuth, the lack of regulatory oversight in DeFi makes self-policing necessary. “In every other industry, there are regulations at the [bare] minimum,” Zach says in a Telegram conversation. “These people give the industry a bad name and turn people off.” Zach, who focuses on exposing promoters who hide ties to a token’s backers, says the sleuths started exposing “bad actors” because they were angry that there appeared to be no consequences for taking advantage of people. Zach, whose Twitter bio reads “10x Rug pull survivor,” might also have a personal axe to grind. Zach says the 10x reference is a joke but adds, “If you’re in the space for a while, it’s pretty much impossible not to [have been swindled] in some capacity.”

Gabagool thinks that he and his fellow investigators want to ensure DeFi’s survival. “There is a real possibility, within DeFi, to create a different type of financial system,” he says. “But that requires us to actively attempt to protect retail users from sophisticated actors who have privileged information.”

Gabagool—who says he is a US-based academic and declines to disclose his real name to avoid damaging his teaching career—says he started trading crypto on DeFi platforms at the outset of the pandemic, and did well enough he’s now “paying [his] rent in tokens.” Then he began looking at other activity on these networks, primarily using open source technologies. Since the Ribbon incident, he’s been collaborating with a group of three to seven other amateur digital gumshoes on investigations and has launched his own token with the aim of creating a collective for research. At the peak of the Ribbon hoo-ha, Gabagool and Sisyphus [set up a crowdfunded bounty program called digitalwatchers.eth](#) to reward people providing tips about “bad behavior” in DeFi. According to [Etherscan data](#), digitalwatchers.eth has received about seven ethers from other wallets and transferred just over two ethers to three wallets. Sisyphus declined to be interviewed for this story unless they were paid for their time.

The main problem with amateur investigations is, of course, that they lack teeth. The Twitter threads or blog posts in which crypto-sleuths reveal their findings are only good for warning potential victims or shaming perpetrators. The hope is that people will care enough about their reputations to make amends. That happened with Divergence Ventures, and earlier with NFT marketplace OpenSea, which in September found itself at the center of another “insider trading” scandal after a [Twitter user](#) accused its head of product of hoarding NFTs by artists who were about to be featured on OpenSea’s homepage, thus profiting from the spike in hype. The head of product was forced to resign.

But when shame doesn’t prompt change, there’s little one can do. Many of the behaviors that crypto-sleuths expose take place in a regulatory vacuum. “Insider trading has a very specific meaning—using nonpublic information when trading on the stock market,” says Nick Price, a crypto-asset disputes specialist at law firm Osborne Clarke. “These tokens are not stocks and shares. NFTs aren’t regulated, so it is not insider trading.”

Cases of fraud, such as thefts of crypto or manipulating a smart contract, can be reported to the police, Price says. But he says the level of scrutiny coming from the cryptocurrency community, and the quality of the information that it can crowdsource, is “unprecedented.” For instance, in October the users of DeFi protocol Indexed Finance [said](#) they had unmasked the person who had carried out a \$16 million heist on the network—although negotiations with the hacker to recover the funds ultimately did not pan out. The

team is working “to determine which authorities have jurisdiction over the attack,” [according to a recent Twitter post](#).

The blockchain’s open ledger is a big advantage for investigating mischief. It “leaves a much better audit trail than in other sectors,” Price says. “There is more information out there for people who are willing to do the technical analysis.”

That said, there are risks in relying on anonymous Twitter accounts to police a feverish, high-stakes online space. In May, [@WARONRUGS](#), a Twitter-based watchdog who made a name as a fiery scam-hunter, allegedly [ran away](#) with almost \$500,000 in stolen crypto. Even discounting instances of extreme dishonesty, some worry that a system based on online call-outs is just too prone to abuse. Mitchell Amador, founder of Immunefi—a company that brokers “bug bounty” deals between hackers and DeFi developers—is critical of what he calls “the crowdsourced panopticon” and points to the Twitter abuse heaped on Harris, the young Divergence Ventures employee who had run the wallet used to orchestrate the airdrop operation. Harris, who is still a college student, was targeted with dozens of mocking, taunting, and insulting tweets. Divergence Ventures said she was not to blame for the firm’s actions, but Harris still deleted her Twitter bio and went silent on social media.

Gabagool acknowledges that there is a “sinister side” to policing by Twitter. “I think, for some people, it’s reminiscent of a kind of ‘cancel culture.’ But that was really not my intention,” he says. For him, self-regulation is still the best route to preserve DeFi’s space of freedom and innovation. Failing that, he fears that “there will be something else that emerges. And I can’t guarantee that alternative will be beneficial for the community,” he says.

It might already be too late to stave off that scenario. In September, the US Securities and Exchange Commission [launched an investigation into Uniswap Labs](#), the developer of DeFi exchange Uniswap. SEC chair Gary Gensler has said some DeFi protocols could eventually be [subject to securities regulations](#).

“The question is, do we use an open system people created themselves? Or do we use the long arm of the state?” Amador says. “Either way, we’ll end up with some form of regulations—there’s no doubt about that outcome. Right now, we are still in that adjustment period.”

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HEADLINE	11/15 US partners w/Israel: fight ransomware
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/15/us-forms-new-partnership-israel-fight-ransomware/
GIST	<p>The Biden administration formed a new partnership with Israel to fight ransomware attackers and defend the critical infrastructure that underpins modern life in both countries.</p> <p>The Treasury Department said it would work as part of a new U.S.-Israeli task force on financial technology (fintech), innovation and cybersecurity to define how the two countries will cooperate differently now.</p> <p>“Harnessing both the power of international cooperation and technology innovation will position us to support economic competitiveness, prosperity, and to combat global threats including ransomware,” Deputy Treasury Secretary Adewale “Wally” Adeyemo said in a statement. “As the global economy recovers and ransomware and other illicit finance threats present a grave challenge to Israel and the United States, increased information exchanges, joint work, and collaboration on policy, regulation, and enforcement are critical to our economic and national security objectives.”</p> <p>Mr. Adeyemo announced the partnership amid a trip to Israel lasting Saturday through Monday. The Treasury Department official met Israeli officials and fintech and cybersecurity entrepreneurs, and discussed national security priorities such as Iran and countering terrorist financing during his visit, according to the Treasury Department.</p>

The Treasury Department said the burgeoning task force is developing an agreement about how the U.S. and Israel will define acceptable information sharing related to the financial sector, particularly about cybersecurity and threats.

The forthcoming memorandum of understanding also intends to detail how the countries will better practice “cross-border cybersecurity exercises” surrounding global financial institutions.

The Biden administration’s announcement of its partnership with Israel is part of its broader focus on relying on international collaboration as the solution to ransomware attackers and hackers that have hit medical facilities, schools and businesses with abandon as the COVID-19 pandemic pushed more people online.

The administration’s approach to fighting ransomware will receive new scrutiny from Congress on Wednesday, when a House Homeland Security subcommittee examines the Department of Homeland Security’s efforts with input from officials within the U.S. Secret Service and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

Word of the federal government’s new work with Israel also comes on the heels of the Commerce Department’s addition of the Israeli tech and spyware firm NSO Group to its Entity List earlier this month.

The Entity List is a blacklist of foreign people and enterprises facing restrictions on their businesses in the U.S. because of national security concerns.

The crackdown on NSO Group came after revelations that the firm sold a product giving people access to a smartphone user’s messages, camera and microphone without action by the victimized user, according to the Pegasus Project, an investigation organized by the news outlet Forbidden Stories.

NSO Group previously said it planned to push the Biden administration to reverse its decision.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Moses Staff targets Israel organizations
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/new-moses-staff-group-targets-israeli-organizations-in-destructive-attacks/
GIST	<p>A new hacking group named Moses Staff has attacked Israeli organizations, breached their networks, encrypted their data, but has then refused to negotiate ransom payments, in what security researchers are describing as politically-motivated destructive attacks.</p> <p>First spotted in early October 2021, the group is the third entity of its kind that has exclusively attacked Israeli organizations in recent months, after the Pay2Key and Black Shadow groups.</p> <p>But according to a report published today by Israeli security firm Check Point, Moses Staff behaves differently from the previous two.</p> <p>Instead of trying to hide their attacks and subsequent data leaks as failed ransomware negotiations, Moses Staff openly admits that their intrusions are politically motivated.</p> <p>According to a message posted on a website the group operates on the dark web, Moses Staff openly admits to targeting the Israeli Zionist regime in support of the occupied Palestine territories.</p> <p>As a result, the group often encrypted and then leaked a victim’s data without even attempting to engage in a ransom negotiation process.</p> <p>According to Check Point researchers, who have got a chance to investigate the group’s past attacks, Moses Staff operates using the following patterns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The group breaches victims’ networks by exploiting old vulnerabilities that have been left unpatched.• Past intrusions have been linked to unpatched Microsoft Exchange servers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once they breach a system, the group use tools like PsExec, WMIC, and Powershell to move deeper inside the victim's network. • The group then steals sensitive information from the victim's network before encrypting its data. • Moses Staff typically deploys the open-source DiskCryptor library to perform volume encryption and lock the victims' computers with a bootloader that won't allow the machines to boot without the correct password. Even if a correct password is provided, the data is still encrypted once the system boots. • Check Point said that both the boot password and the encryption key could be recovered in certain circumstances. • The hackers also operate a Telegram channel and Twitter account where they announce new victims they add to their leak site. <p>Check Point researchers declined to attribute the group to any specific country, lacking any concrete evidence; however, they did point out that some samples of the group's malware had been submitted to the VirusTotal web malware scanner from Palestine IP addresses months before Moses Staff's first attack.</p> <p>So far, Moses Staff has listed 16 victims on their leak site. At the time of writing, the group is still active, having announced the Unit 8200 leak this past Saturday and a leak of a 3D image map of Israel allegedly obtained from the Israeli government itself on Sunday.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 Cybersecurity focus for tribal casinos
SOURCE	https://www.cdcgamingreports.com/tribalnet-after-numerous-attacks-tribal-casinos-are-taking-cyber-security-very-seriously/
GIST	<p>Tribal governments, casinos, and health facilities remain under a heightened alert for cyber attacks after the FBI's Cyber Division issued a warning that millions of dollars in costs and damages are at risk.</p> <p>Dated Nov. 3, the alert served as a reminder to tribal leaders and information-technology professionals gathered last week at the TribalNet Conference & Tradeshow in suburban Dallas, where cyber security was already a big focus with at least eight sessions dealing with the topic.</p> <p>"Ransomware attacks in recent months against tribal entities have caused damages estimated in the millions of dollars and the FBI has received reports of tribal entities affected by ransomware attacks since at least 2016," the alert said. "Entities impacted by these attacks include tribal governments, healthcare-service providers, emergency-services providers, schools, and casinos, with attacks leading to operational disruption, sensitive-data theft, and financial losses."</p> <p>A number of the attacks made the news in been 2020 and 2021 and the National Indian Gaming Commission revealed over the summer that cyber attacks have jumped 1,000% since 2019. There was one in 2019, which soared to 12 in roughly 18 months in 2020 and 2021.</p> <p>The issue came to a head in June when six Oklahoma tribal casinos were subject to ransomware demands and had to close temporarily. In August, the Ho-Chunk Nation in the Wisconsin Dells was hit and the casino was shuttered for four days. The Tesuque Casino in New Mexico was the subject of cyber attacks and closed for three days in September.</p> <p>Hackers have been getting into and shutting down casino systems, then demanding ransoms in return. Some seek out credit information and other personal details of customers that they can sell on the dark web. Not only casinos, but tribal medical facilities are attacked and asked to pay ransom; it's an even bigger threat, since patient lives are at risk.</p> <p>"The alert was focused particularly on ransomware, because of what's been happening recently," said Mike Day, CEO of TribalHub, which put on the TribalNet technology-focused conference. "We're seeing it and everybody's seeing it."</p>

Day is a member of the newly formed non-profit Tribal Information Sharing and Analysis Center, a platform for helping tribes protect against cyber threats. The group monitors cyber-threat advisories and pushes that information out to tribes, he said.

“They’re making everybody aware of what we know, which is reiterating that there have been increasing threats to Native American organizations, and not just governments, casinos, and health systems,” Day said. “A lot of critical infrastructure across the country is held on tribal lands, and they’re worried about that.”

Since 2019, no less than nine different ransomware groups are known to have attacked tribes and tribal enterprises, Day said, and at least 12 tribes, plus a major casino-equipment supplier, have fallen victim to ransomware. These are just the reported incidents; unreported numbers “make this significantly higher,” he said.

The mention of millions of dollars from ransomware attacks is the first public acknowledgement of what’s happened to tribal operations cost-wise. Tribes have never revealed how they dealt with the attacks, although NIGC executives said over the summer that attackers have requested several hundred thousand dollars and even more than \$1 million in some cases without saying how much was paid out. Tribes aren’t required to report the cyber attacks to the NIGC, so a clear number of attacks and payouts isn’t known.

“The stance of the federal government is never to pay a ransom,” Day said. “The stance of insurance companies, when you get cyber insurance, is almost always to pay the ransom. They’re in conflict. The worry is tribes are funding the guys that are behind all this. We just have to figure out how to prevent it, so we’re stopping it altogether.”

John Iannarelli, who served on the Cyber Division’s executive staff at the FBI and is a former assistant special agent in charge of overseeing cyber investigations, served as a keynote speaker at the TribalNet Conference. He said it’s not surprising that hackers are targeting tribal casinos and governments viewed as easier targets than commercial casinos. It’s not a question of if, but when tribes should expect to be hit, he said.

“Some of the big casinos in Vegas have entire teams of people who do nothing but cyber security and physical security, but that’s not always the focus of the Indian casinos,” Iannarelli said. “Some of it is just available resources. It’s hard to find cyber people in general. The entire business world in this country is woefully understaffed in the cyber arena, so cyber talent working onsite isn’t always easy to find.”

Larger casinos stand a better chance of warding off attacks. They tend to do a better job of training employees, since many attacks can originate from workers going on their personal email at work and clicking on a suspicious link. It can even happen from their home computer if they’re working on a tribal website, Iannarelli said.

“All you need is a little protection in place,” Iannarelli said. “There are so many opportunities for cyber thieves. They’re not going to waste their time trying to get past somebody who has protection. They’ll just go on to the next person who hasn’t done as good of a job as you have in protecting yourself.”

Cyber attacks are accelerating, because criminals have figured out there’s a lot of money to be made. They’re requesting five figures, six figures, and even higher, he said.

“If I rob a casino at gunpoint, the chances are I’ll get caught — or worse, something will happen to me,” Iannarelli said. “If I’m safely behind my computer, first you have to find me. A lot of these thieves aren’t in the U.S., so U.S. law enforcement, including the FBI, has no jurisdiction.”

Exacerbating the situation is that cyber attacks aren’t the FBI’s number-one priority. Instead, counterterrorism and counterintelligence are where the resources are allocated, Iannarelli said. That’s why it’s important for casinos to protect themselves and one of the ways is to religiously back up data, so they can wipe the ransomware off their system and reinstall their data.

As for who are the culprits for cyber attacks in general, Iannarelli cited state-sponsored terrorism, saying that China, for example, has an army of hackers to attack businesses and disrupt the U.S. economy

“You also see it from Iran, North Korea, and certainly there’s a lot going on from Russia as well,” Iannarelli said. “There’s also the good-old-fashioned criminal sitting in a cyber cafe somewhere who is just doing it for profit. And there’s definitely corporate espionage. If competitors are nearby, who’s to say they’re not trying to put you out of business to drive business to their own casino?”

Dave Bailey, president and general manager of technology company Arctic IT, also spoke at the conference, saying China or Chinese technology and some competitors may be responsible for some of the attacks. Many hackers have turned away from gathering credit-card and other data to instead take down revenue-generating operations. That could be the casino games, parking systems, or credit-card processors, he said.

“If they can take down revenue-generation operations for a period of time, they can get the casino to pay a ransom,” Bailey said. “Casinos will pay when the ransom is less than it costs to be shut down.”

The overarching lesson from the TribalNet conference, according to Day, is that cyber security needs to be taken seriously, not just from the technology team, but the entire organization, all the way up to the top executives. What was different at the conference this year is that even technology vendors at the tradeshow had a security messaging component for their products, he said.

Conference attendees were quick to acknowledge that cyber security is at elevated levels at their properties.

“If you’re not concerned, you’re naive,” said Virgil Debrosse, the IT senior account manager for the Chickasaw Nation in Oklahoma. “I can tell you it’s a top priority in terms of how we manage our patch process, multi-factor authentication, and onboarding new vendors and new technology. Security is one of the first steps we go through in the vetting process.”

Debrosse said organizations are vulnerable if IT departments are run “very lean.” In that case, something has to give, but even large Las Vegas casinos have been hit in the past, so no one is immune. With the shift to the cloud, it’s become even more important to have rigorous protocols to make sure systems are secure, he said.

“It’s not surprising at all (that it’s a big focus at the conference),” Debrosse said. “It should be at the forefront of everybody’s mind, because the threat is real.”

Fran Moore, director of information technology for the Wild Horse Resort in eastern Oregon, said her casino purchased a network-control system costing \$250,000 that will help in warding off cyber attacks.

Steve Neely, general manager of the Rolling Hills Casino in Northern California, said it’s a focus of theirs, but he still worries that no matter how diligent they try to be, hackers are working to figure out ways to get around tomorrow what they have in place today.

“We continue to invest,” Neely said. “We’re a high-valued industry with a lot of data, so it make senses to want to target us.”

Patrick Tinklenberg, vice president of IT at Sycuan Casino in Southern California, said funding by the tribe has made a difference in building infrastructure, implementing user education, adding security products and tying in awareness training. It could still come down, however, to a team member clicking on a link or opening an email that allows hackers access no matter what’s done systemwide.

	“We’ve had a lot of attempted attacks and watch and manage them,” Tinklenberg said. “A number of years ago, we had an attack that scared us badly, but didn’t do any damage. It certainly made us aware of our vulnerabilities. I’m constantly worried about it.”
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	11/16 Uganda: blasts triple-suicide bombing
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/explosion-uganda-capital-kills-least-two-local-tv-2021-11-16/
GIST	<p>KAMPALA, Nov 16 (Reuters) - Three suicide bombers in the heart of Uganda's capital killed at least three civilians and sent parliamentarians rushing for cover as nearby cars burst into flames, witnesses and police said, the latest in a string of bombings over the past month.</p> <p>At least 33 people were being treated at Mulago Hospital, including five people in critical condition, police spokesperson Fred Enanga said.</p> <p>There was no immediate claim of responsibility. The al Qaeda-linked Somali insurgent group al Shabaab has carried out deadly attacks in Uganda. Last month another group, the Islamic State-aligned Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), claimed its first attack in Uganda.</p> <p>"Our intelligence also indicates that these are domestic terror groups that are linked to ADF," said Enanga.</p> <p>The explosions - the first near the central police station and the second very close to parliament - sent bloodied office workers scrambling for cover over shards of broken glass as a plume of white smoke rose above the downtown area.</p> <p>A single suicide bomber carried out the first blast near the checkpoint at the police station, which killed two people, Enanga said. Then two suicide bombers on motorbikes detonated, killing one other person.</p> <p>"A booming sound like that from a big gun went off. The ground shook, my ears nearly went deaf," Peter Olupot, a 28-year-old bank guard who was near the attack near parliament, told Reuters.</p> <p>"I saw a vehicle on fire and everyone was running and panicking. I saw a boda boda (motorcycle) man - his head was smashed and covered in blood."</p> <p>A Reuters journalist saw burned cars behind a police cordon at the scene and a reporter with local television station NTV Uganda said he saw two bodies in the street.</p> <p>Irene Nakasiita, spokesperson at the Uganda Red Cross, said they would release information about the blasts later.</p> <p>Ugandan soldiers are fighting al Shabaab in Somalia as part of an U.N.-backed African Union peacekeeping force. Al Shabaab's bombings in Uganda include a 2010 attack that killed 70 people watching the World Cup.</p> <p>Last month, the ADF made its first claim of responsibility for a blast in Uganda with a bomb - packed with shrapnel - that killed a waitress at a restaurant.</p> <p>Also last month, Ugandan police said a suicide bomber had blown up a bus, killing himself and injuring others. His affiliation was unclear.</p> <p>The ADF was originally established by Ugandan Muslims but now have their main bases in the forested mountains of the Democratic Republic of Congo, which borders Uganda.</p>

	Both the ADF and al Shabaab frequently use explosive devices and have been accused of killing thousands of civilians.
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HEADLINE	11/16 Gunmen kill 15 in Nigeria northwest
SOURCE	https://federalnewsnetwork.com/world-news/2021/11/gunmen-kill-15-in-latest-attack-in-nigerias-northwest/
GIST	<p>LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — Gunmen have killed at least 15 people in Nigeria’s northwest, the Sokoto state governor said, the latest incident in a spiral of violence in Africa’s most populous country.</p> <p>The gunmen stormed communities in Sokoto state and raided houses from Sunday night into Monday morning, Gov. Aminu Tambuwal said in a statement, just days after nearly 30 people were shot dead across remote communities across Nigeria’s troubled north.</p> <p>At least 13 people were killed in Illela, a town near the border with neighboring Niger and some 97 kilometers (60 miles) from the state capital, he said, adding that two others were killed in Goronyo, about 76 kilometers (47 miles) east of the state capital.</p> <p>The violent attacks across the northwest and central parts of Nigeria have killed hundreds of people this year.</p> <p>Most affected communities are in remote areas that don’t have adequate security or telecommunications, such as Goronyo community where more than 40 people were shot dead a month ago when assailants opened fire at a crowded marketplace.</p> <p>The gunmen are mostly young men from the Fulani ethnic group who had traditionally worked as nomadic cattle herders and are caught up in a decades-long conflict with Hausa farming communities over access to water and grazing land, according to authorities and security analysts.</p> <p>The attacks have taken on ethnic and religious dimensions, with clashes often reported in volatile states between the herdsman and local communities. The assailants — called bandits in Nigeria — are “graduating into terrorists,” Gov. Tambuwal said.</p> <p>The widespread banditry in the northwest is in addition to the Islamic extremist insurgency in the northeast that has lasted more than a decade. Some of the bandits — who often operate in bands of more than 100 — are now joining forces with the extremist rebels, security analysts and residents have told AP.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Germany: man charged in attack plan
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/germany-charges-syrian-man-in-alleged-extremist-attack-plan/2021/11/16/25912212-46c7-11ec-beca-3cc7103bd814_story.html
GIST	<p>BERLIN — A Syrian man who allegedly supported the Islamic State group’s ideology has been charged with making preparations for an attack in Germany, prosecutors said Tuesday.</p> <p>The suspect, who was identified only as Abdullah H. in keeping with German privacy rules, was charged at a Berlin court with preparing a serious act of violence and terror financing. He was arrested in November 2019 in another case, which prosecutors gave no details of.</p> <p>Federal prosecutors said that he decided by June 2019 to carry out an attack in Germany that would be on a similar scale to previous IS attacks in Europe. They said his aim was to kill or wound as many people as possible.</p> <p>Prosecutors said that the man acquired material to build improvised explosive devices, including acetone, hydrogen peroxide and sulfuric acid. He also allegedly made enquiries about using ordinary fertilizer as an explosive, acquired various metal parts and tools, and began to build a submachine gun.</p>

	The alleged plans were halted by his arrest, prosecutors said.
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HEADLINE	11/16 Uganda capital hit by twin explosions
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ugandan-capital-kampala-hit-by-twin-explosions-11637054105?mod=hp_lead_pos10
GIST	<p>KAMPALA, Uganda—Twin explosions ripped through locations in the center of Uganda’s capital during morning rush hour on Tuesday in a suspected terrorist attack targeting a police facility and a building complex housing commercial offices.</p> <p>Videos from the scenes broadcast on local television channel NTV showed maimed bodies scattered along sidewalks, heavy clouds of smoke and burning vehicles, after two explosions detonated in quick succession around 550 yards apart. Local authorities said the explosions were likely terrorism related.</p> <p>Uganda’s government made no official comment on casualties. Local television reports said at least two people had been killed and scores injured by the explosions. Police and troops evacuated buildings in the central business district and closed off several roads.</p> <p>Last month, Islamic State made its first claim of responsibility for a blast in Uganda after a bomb at a Kampala restaurant killed a waitress.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Hospital blast declared terror incident
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/nov/15/liverpool-womens-hospital-blast-declared-a-terrorist-incident
GIST	<p>The explosion outside a hospital in Liverpool that left one man dead and another seriously injured has been declared a terrorist incident, police have said, as the terror threat level in the UK was raised.</p> <p>Police said that following discussions with bomb disposal officers the explosion was being treated “as the ignition of an explosive device”.</p> <p>A taxi burst into flames outside the Liverpool Women’s hospital at 10.59am on Remembrance Sunday in dramatic scenes that were captured on video.</p> <p>Police later confirmed that a male passenger was declared dead at the scene, while the cab driver, who has been widely named in reports as David Perry, from Kirkdale, managed to escape, and has since been discharged from hospital.</p> <p>The threat to Britain from terrorism was raised to severe on Monday – meaning that an attack is deemed highly likely.</p> <p>The decision, taken on Monday by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre, represents an upgrade of one notch from the previous threat level of substantial.</p> <p>The threat level had been at the lower level since 8 February following a “significant reduction” in the momentum of attacks in Europe, including those seen in Austria and France between September and November 2020.</p> <p>The improvised explosive device had been manufactured and the assumption is that it was built by the deceased passenger, according to early police findings, and while the motive is unclear one line of inquiry is a possible link with remembrance events taking place on Sunday.</p> <p>The assistant chief constable Russ Jackson from Counter Terrorism Policing North West told a press conference police believed they knew the identity of the passenger but could not confirm at this time.</p>

Three men aged 21, 26 and 29 were arrested on Sunday under the Terrorism Act, while a fourth man aged 20 was arrested on Monday.

Jackson told the press conference that the taxi driver picked up a fare in Rutland Avenue, Liverpool, shortly before 11am on Sunday. The fare, a man, asked to be taken to the Liverpool Women's hospital, which was about 10 minutes away.

As the taxi approached the drop-off point at the hospital, an explosion occurred from within the car, which quickly engulfed it in flames.

The driver escaped from the cab and was treated for the injuries he sustained and later discharged from hospital.

The prime minister, Boris Johnson, praised the efforts of the taxi driver. He said: "This is an ongoing investigation so I can't comment on the details or exactly what type of incident it was, what type of crime it may have been. But it does look as though the taxi driver in question did behave with incredible presence of mind and bravery.

"But I've got to say this is something that is an ongoing investigation. I think it would be premature to say much more than that."

The Guardian understands Johnson will chair a Cobra meeting on the attack on Monday afternoon. Cobra is shorthand for the Civil Contingencies Committee, which is convened to handle matters of national emergency or major disruption.

Jackson said inquiries indicated that the device was brought into the cab by the passenger, who was declared dead at the scene.

The first three arrests took place in Sutcliffe Street, where witnesses reported seeing armed officers swoop on a terrace house on Sunday afternoon.

Keith Ford, 47, a production operative who lives in Sutcliffe Street with his partner and 13-year-old daughter, witnessed the dramatic arrests. "I'd say about an hour and a half later, a man came out of the property that they were pointing the guns at," he said.

"He came to the front door, police shouted at him, saying 'hands up in the air', then he walked to the pub on the end of the corner."

Ford described the man as having dark hair, dark trousers and a blue T-shirt. He continued: "A couple of hours later, another man came to the door, the police were shouting at him, saying: 'Hands up in the air, hands up in the air.'"

He understood that the occupants of the property changed around two months ago and had not seen anyone since they moved in.

Ford was told to evacuate his home and spent the night at his parents' house before returning on Monday morning.

Jan Temple, 61, who lives with her two sons in Sutcliffe Street, was evacuated at 9.30pm on Sunday night. Of the people living in the property, she said: "We very rarely saw anybody coming or going."

The fourth arrest took place in the Kensington area of the city, police said.

A second address was searched in Rutland Avenue in Sefton Park, where police found "significant items", Jackson said, adding that further searches would be necessary.

	<p>A cordon was in place at this location on Monday and eight families had been evacuated from the area.</p> <p>Jackson said the motivation behind the incident was unclear. “The reason why he then took [the device] to the Women’s hospital is unknown, as is the reason for its sudden explosion.</p> <p>“We are of course aware that there were remembrance events just a short distance away from the hospital and that the ignition occurred shortly before 11am.</p> <p>“We cannot at this time draw any connection with this but it is a line of inquiry we are pursuing.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 UK raises terror threat level to ‘severe’
SOURCE	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-terrorism-threat-level-raised-to-severe
GIST	<p>Following yesterday’s incident in Liverpool, the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) has today (15 November) taken the decision to raise the UK National Threat Level from SUBSTANTIAL, meaning an attack is likely, to SEVERE, meaning an attack is highly likely.</p> <p>The decision has been driven by two terrorist incidents in the past month, reflecting the diverse, complex and volatile nature of the terrorist threat in the UK.</p> <p>Home Secretary Priti Patel said: <i>Following yesterday’s shocking incident in Liverpool, the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre has raised the UK Threat Level to SEVERE.</i></p> <p><i>It is important that the public remains alert to the threat from terrorism but not alarmed. I urge anyone with information or who suspects any suspicious activity to report it to the police.</i></p> <p>Threat levels are determined independently of Ministers and are a tool for security practitioners, including the police, to use in determining what protective security response may be required.</p> <p>The UK was last at SEVERE in November 2020 before being lowered to SUBSTANTIAL in February 2021.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Afghan Shiites seek Taliban protection
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mistrust-afghan-shiites-seek-taliban-protection-81197186
GIST	<p>KABUL, Afghanistan -- Outside a Shiite shrine in Kabul, four armed Taliban fighters stood guard on a recent Friday as worshippers filed in for weekly prayers. Alongside them was a guard from Afghanistan’s mainly Shiite Hazara minority, an automatic rifle slung over his shoulder.</p> <p>It was a sign of the strange, new relationship brought by the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan. The Taliban, Sunni hard-liners who for decades targeted the Hazaras as heretics, are now their only protection against a more brutal enemy: the Islamic State group.</p> <p>Sohrab, the Hazara guard standing watch over the Abul Fazl al-Abbas Shrine, told The Associated Press that he gets along fine with the Taliban guards. “They even pray in the mosque sometimes,” he said, giving only his first name for security reasons.</p> <p>Not everyone feels so comfortable.</p> <p>Syed Aqil, a young Hazara visiting the ornate shrine along with his wife and 8-month-old daughter, was disturbed that many of the Taliban still wear their traditional garb — the look of a jihadi insurgent — rather than a police uniform.</p>

“We can’t even tell if they are Taliban or Daesh,” he said, using the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State group.

Since seizing power three months ago, the Taliban have presented themselves as more moderate, compared with their first rule in the late 1990s when they violently repressed the Hazaras and other ethnic groups. Courting international recognition, they vow to protect the Hazaras as a show of their acceptance of the country’s minorities.

But many Hazaras still deeply distrust the insurgents-turned-rulers, who are overwhelmingly ethnic Pashtu, and are convinced they will never accept them as equals in Afghanistan. Hazara community leaders say they have met repeatedly with Taliban leadership, asking to take part in the government, only to be shunned. Hazaras complain individual fighters still discriminate against them and fear it’s only a matter of time before the Taliban revert to repression.

“In comparison to their previous rule, the Taliban are a little better,” said Mohammed Jawad Gawhari, a Hazara cleric who runs an organization helping the poor.

“The problem is that there is not a single law. Every individual Talib is their own law right now,” he said. “So people live in fear of them.”

Some changes from the previous era of Taliban rule are clear. After their August takeover, the Taliban allowed Shiites to perform their religious ceremonies, such as the annual Ashura procession.

The Taliban initially confiscated weapons that Hazaras had used, with permission from the previous government to guard some of their own mosques in Kabul. But after devastating IS bombings of Shiite mosques in Kandahar and Kunduz provinces in October, the Taliban returned the weapons in most cases, Gawhari and other community leaders said. The Taliban also provide their own fighters as guards for some mosques during Friday prayers.

“We are providing a safe and secure environment for everyone, especially the Hazaras,” Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said. “They should be in Afghanistan. Leaving the country is not good for anyone.”

The Hazaras’ turning to Taliban protection shows how terrified the community is of the Islamic State group, which they say aims to exterminate them. In past years, IS has attacked the Hazaras more ruthlessly than the Taliban ever did, unleashing bombings against Hazara schools, hospitals and mosques, killing hundreds.

IS is also a shared enemy. Though they are Sunni hard-liners like the Taliban, IS militants are waging an insurgency, with frequent attacks on Taliban fighters.

Some Hazara leaders see a potential for cooperation. Ahmed Ali al-Rashed, a senior Hazara cleric, praised the Taliban commanders who now run the main police station in Dashti Barchi, the sprawling district of west Kabul dominated by Hazaras.

“If all Taliban were like them, Afghanistan would be like a garden of flowers,” he said.

Others in Dashti Barchi were skeptical the Taliban will ever change.

Marzieh Mohammadi, whose husband was killed five years ago in fighting with the Taliban, said she’s afraid every time she sees them patrolling Dashti Barchi.

“How can they protect us? We can’t trust them. We feel like they are Daesh,” she said.

The differences are partly religious. But also Hazaras, who make up an estimated 10% of Afghanistan’s population of nearly 40 million, are ethnically distinct and speak a variant of Farsi rather than Pashtu.

They have a long history of being oppressed by the ethnic Pashtu majority, some of whom stereotype them as intruders.

Aqil said that when he tried to go to a police station for a document, the Taliban guard at the gate only spoke Pashtu and impatiently slammed the door in his face. He had to come back later with a Pashtu-speaking colleague.

“This sort of situation makes me lose hope in the future,” he said. “They don’t know us. They are not broadminded to accept other communities. They act as if they are the owners of this country.”

A young Hazara woman, Massoumeh, said four people were killed last month in her part of Dashti Barchi, raising residents’ fears that people with roles in the previous government were targets.

She went with a community delegation led by a local elder to the area’s Taliban police station to discuss security. The only woman in the delegation, she had to wait in the yard while the others met with the district commander, who she said tried to blame the security failings on the local elder. As the delegation left, a guard told them not to bring a woman with them again, she said.

“How can you keep security in Afghanistan if you can’t keep security in our village?” she said.

The 21-year-old Massoumeh was a nurse at Dashti Barchi’s main hospital in 2020 when IS gunmen stormed the maternity ward, killing at least 24 people, mostly mothers who were pregnant or had just given birth — one of the militants’ most horrific attacks.

Since then, she has been too afraid to return to work because of death threats after she spoke about the attack on Afghan TV. Soon after the attack, two militants approached her on a bus late at night, picking her out using a photo on their phone, and pulled a gun on her, warning her not to go back to work, she said. She and her father still get threatening phone calls, she said.

Police under the previous government gave her some protection, she said. But she doesn’t even bother to ask the Taliban police for help.

“Of course not. We are afraid of them,” she said. “No one will come and help us.”

Other events in the Hazaras’ central Afghanistan heartland have raised the community’s concerns. In Daikundi province, Taliban fighters killed 11 Hazara soldiers and two civilians, including a teenage girl, in August, according to Amnesty International. Taliban officials also expelled Hazara families from several Daikundi villages after accusing them of living on land that didn’t belong to them.

After an uproar from Hazaras, further expulsions were halted, Gawhari and other community leaders said.

But so far, the Taliban have rejected repeated requests from the Hazaras for a say in government. Gawhari, the cleric, said a Hazara delegation approached the Taliban and proposed 50 Hazara experts and academics to be brought into the administration. “They were not interested,” he said.

The international community is pressing the Taliban to form a government that reflects Afghanistan’s ethnic, religious and political spectrum, including women. The Taliban’s Cabinet is comprised entirely of men from their own ranks.

Last week, Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi expressed impatience with international demands for inclusivity. “Our current Cabinet fulfils that requirement, we have representatives from all ethnicities,” he told reporters.

The highest level Hazara in the administration is a deputy health minister. Several other Hazaras hold some provincial posts, but they are Hazaras who long ago joined the Taliban insurgency and adopted its hard-line ideology. Few in the Hazara community recognize them.

Ali Akbar Jamshidi, a former parliament member representing Daikundi province, said Hazaras won't be satisfied with a few local positions and want to be brought into the Cabinet and the intelligence and security services.

The Taliban, he said, are running a government "that acts like a warlord who has seized everything."

"Physical security is not enough. We need psychological security as well, feeling like we are part of this government and it is part of us," he said. "The Taliban can benefit from us. They have the opportunity to form a government for the future, but they are not taking this opportunity."

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	11/15 King Co. nonprofit staff salaries to \$70K
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/labor-shortage-or-living-wage-shortage-one-king-county-nonprofit-is-taking-a-different-approach/
GIST	<p>Over the past few months, conventional wisdom has emerged asserting that the U.S. is experiencing a labor shortage.</p> <p>A headline in Fortune on Friday read, "Where are all the workers, and when are they coming back?" Countless articles have lamented the "great resignation" facing the U.S. workforce and theorized over the causes. Some attribute it to expanded pandemic unemployment benefits, but research does not bear that out as the driving cause.</p> <p>Now, a new idea is emerging, and one that could have a significant effect on economic justice and wealth inequality for future generations: there is not a labor shortage as much as people are no longer willing to take low-paying jobs in which they cannot earn a living wage.</p> <p>As Alana Semuels wrote in Time, " ... what's really happening is more accurately described as a living-wage shortage, a hazard pay shortage, a childcare shortage, a paid sick leave shortage, and a health care shortage."</p> <p>One local nonprofit decided to do something about it.</p> <p>About a week ago, Choose 180, a Burien-based youth diversion nonprofit, raised all its staff salaries to a minimum of \$70,000 a year. For some of the organization's 24 staff, the pay hikes amounted to a \$20,000 annual raise in an instant, using existing funds. The increases added about \$400,000 to its 2022 budget, Executive Director Sean Goode said, an amount the board supported unanimously. He was confident he would be able to fundraise to support the change going forward.</p> <p>But the decision didn't happen overnight. Goode said that when staff first suggested changing the pay structure months ago, he initially balked.</p> <p>"Until I had one of my team members kind of call me on the carpet about it, I didn't realize how bad things were [financially] for some of our team members," he said. Goode said he had been seduced into thinking that this is just how it was in the nonprofit world. He started at a large nonprofit making next to nothing and then worked his way up, so what was the problem?</p> <p>But as he talked to more staff and listened to their struggles, his perspective shifted. Some staff members were working multiple jobs to survive. One director reminded him that the philosophy of Choose 180 was that the living conditions of the young people they worked with needed to change in order for them to have a fighting chance to live beyond what he called the disease of violence and the stress of poverty. Could it</p>

be that they were paying their own team members to live in the same conditions? Goode said the conversation was a “gut punch” that sparked a transformation.

“We live in the richest country in the world. And we live in one of the richest places in the country. We are constantly talking about a housing crisis. Meanwhile, paying people at rates that leave them one paycheck away from being unhoused,” he said. “We can’t continue to only address those who are living on the street today, we have to also address those that are working hard today, but are one paycheck away because they’re failing to make a living wage.”

Durell Green, Choose 180’s community navigator, knows that struggle. When he started in the nonprofit world at a different organization, he said he took a big pay cut but wanted to do work he believed in. But for those first years, he didn’t have his own place to stay and sometimes had to live in his car.

“I’m literally getting awards for community service and stuff and I have no place to put those plaques. There’s no wall to put them up on. That’s the reality,” Green said.

Green said it doesn’t just impact the staff themselves, it also sends a message to the young people they serve. “It’s difficult when you’re out there serving the youth, and you’re trying to provide them better alternatives,” Green said. “But they can look at your lifestyle and be like, ‘I don’t want to be like you when I grow up.’ ”

Rebecca Thornton was one of the staff members Goode talked to when he was trying to understand the scope of the wage problem. Thornton is the organization’s office manager and bookkeeper and a single mom who is studying accounting. She said that when Goode asked her if she had a savings account or could save for a house, she laughed.

Before coming to Choose 180, she was working three jobs and still barely making it. The stress and insecurity of that time still haunts her. She said even working six or seven days a week, she still had to rely on help from others for food and Christmas presents.

“I’m hoping this bleeds into other organizations and future generations because no one deserves to work multiple jobs,” she said. “I missed out on a lot of my kid’s firsts because I was working.”

Now, she can see staying at Choose 180 for the long haul, knowing she can support her family and even think about buying a house or donating to causes she supports.

While the Choose 180 pay hike might seem dramatic, it shouldn’t. According to MIT’s [Living Wage Calculator](#), a parent like Thornton would need to make just shy of \$76,000 to live in King County.

Yet according to a [recent story](#) in The Seattle Times on the struggle for homelessness nonprofits to find workers, the starting pay at one large Seattle nonprofit that serves people experiencing homelessness is just around \$18 an hour for front-line staff, or about \$37,000 a year. In September the agency had over 140 openings.

Goode is under no illusions about the challenges ahead to improve pay and change the culture of taking a “pledge of poverty” to work in the nonprofit sector. But you have to start somewhere. “What I do know is it takes one person to step up, step out, and do it loudly for other people to pay attention,” he said.

Then, he said, the next time an agency is writing a grant for funding, instead of putting in a request for \$37,000 for front-line staff, they might put in \$70,000, and that starts the culture shift.

“Look, if a Black-led nonprofit — with a board that’s made up of primarily people of color, with a staff team that’s largely comprised of people of color — can do it, then in this largely white-dominant culture, anybody should be able to do it,” Goode said. “So it’s not a question of ability. It’s a question of will.”

HEADLINE	11/15 Russia antisatellite missile test debris cloud
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/15/science/russia-anti-satellite-missile-test-debris.html
GIST	<p>Russia carried out an antisatellite missile test on Monday, obliterating one of its own satellites in orbit. The test created a vast cloud of debris that continues to orbit Earth, and some of the material loomed dangerously close to the International Space Station, forcing astronauts to take shelter for hours in a pair of spacecraft capable of returning them to Earth.</p> <p>Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken in a statement on Monday described the missile strike as “recklessly conducted.”</p> <p>“The test has so far generated over 1,500 pieces of trackable orbital debris, and will likely generate hundreds of thousands of pieces of smaller orbital debris,” he added. The U.S. Space Command said in a statement that the “debris will remain in orbit for years and potentially for decades, posing a significant risk to the crew on the International Space Station and other human spaceflight activities.”</p> <p>“This is pitiful that the Russians would do this,” Bill Nelson, NASA’s administrator, said in an interview. He said NASA officials have talked to Russia’s space agency, Roscosmos, about the antisatellite test. Mr. Nelson said the NASA official who oversees the space station, Joel Montalbano, as well as NASA’s third highest-ranking official, Bob Cabana, are in Moscow and plan to discuss the test with their Russian counterparts tomorrow.</p> <p>Mr. Nelson also noted that the incident threatened the three astronauts now aboard China's Tiangong space station.</p> <p>Russian military officials did not reply to requests for comment about the weapon test. But it occurred at a moment when military tensions between Russia and the United States have grown. Last Wednesday, the State Department said Russia was building up troops on its border with Ukraine. Mr. Blinken said that aggressive actions on the border “would be of great concern to the United States.”</p> <p>NASA and Roscosmos, which jointly manage the space station and protect the astronauts inside, have largely been insulated from the military tensions between Washington and Moscow. But those two geopolitical spheres clashed after Monday’s weapon test.</p> <p>Mr. Nelson said he had “reason to believe” that Roscosmos officials were not aware that Russia’s Ministry of Defense had been planning to launch an antisatellite missile.</p> <p>“And had any of those known about it, they should’ve been raising Cain, because of the threats to the astronauts and cosmonauts on the space station,” he said.</p> <p>Russian authorities filed airspace notices on Monday warning airplanes to avoid the Plesetsk launch site roughly 650 miles north of Moscow. It is the same location where an earlier Russian antisatellite missile lifted off in December 2020, though that test did not strike any target. The notifications on Monday indicated a launch was to occur early Monday morning, around the same time that an old Russian surveillance satellite was poised to pass over the area.</p> <p>The missile struck the satellite, named Cosmos 1408, blowing it to pieces.</p> <p>At about the same time, NASA astronauts on the space station were abruptly awakened by a mission control official in Houston who instructed the astronauts to take shelter in their spacecraft.</p> <p>“Hey Mark, good morning, sorry for the early call,” said a NASA official in Houston, speaking to Mark Vande Hei, one of four NASA astronauts currently on the space station. “We were recently informed of a satellite breakup and need to have you guys start reviewing the safe haven procedure.”</p> <p>During Monday’s event, astronauts closed various hatches between compartments on the station and boarded spacecraft docked with the orbital outpost that could return them to Earth in the event of an</p>

accident. There are currently two spacecraft — a SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule and a Russian Soyuz capsule — capable of entering Earth’s atmosphere and carrying crews to the surface.

Raja Chari, the commander of [a NASA mission that brought four astronauts to the space station last week](#), boarded the Crew Dragon spacecraft and powered it on in case it needed to undock.

The astronauts remained in the capsules for about two hours, from shortly before 2 a.m. to about 4 a.m. Soon after the reports of the test emerged, Roscosmos said the space station was “in the green zone” and safe from what it described as “the object.” A spokesman for the agency declined to elaborate and deferred to Russia’s Ministry of Defense.

Antisatellite tests spawn clouds of debris that can remain in space for decades. Russia’s strike on Monday created the largest new field of space junk since 2007, when China launched a missile at one of its old weather satellites. That weapon test created a swarm of roughly 2,300 pieces of debris.

The United States conducted its own weapon test in 2008, which created an orbital cloud of about 400 pieces.

An [Indian weapon test in 2019](#) left about [as many pieces of debris as the 2008 American test](#).

The NASA administrator at the time, Jim Bridenstine, said that the Indian test put the space station at risk. And just last week, NASA and Russian officials were forced to move the International Space Station’s position in orbit to [dodge a piece of debris from the 2007 Chinese test](#).

But weapon tests are not the only source of debris in space. [Aging satellites](#) that are not properly removed from orbit have added to [the world’s space junk ills](#). Experts also worry about the risks posed by private companies, many of which are based in the United States, that plan to launch [thousands of satellites](#) that would beam high-speed internet service down to Earth.

U.S. military officials have increased their footprint in space in recent years as competition in low-Earth orbit builds between Washington, Russia and China, including by creating the U.S. Space Force as a separate branch of the armed forces. The Pentagon has long criticized Russia over its space activities, which have included moving satellites too close to U.S. spy satellites and launching satellites that hatch smaller, maneuverable spacecraft without warning.

“Russia’s tests of direct-ascent antisatellite weapons clearly demonstrate that Russia continues to pursue counterspace weapon systems that undermine strategic stability and pose a threat to all nations,” James Dickinson, commander of U.S. Space Command, said in a statement.

Some of the astronauts aboard the space station seemed to take the day’s events in stride. Mr. Vande Hei, who has been in orbit since April, thanked NASA’s mission control in Houston “for a crazy but well-coordinated day” after the crews left their lifeboats.

“It was certainly a great way to bond with the crew,” he said.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Plagues strike Egypt: floods then scorpions
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/15/world/middleeast/scorpions-egypt.html
GIST	CAIRO — First came the lightning that strobe-lit the Nile skies a pale purply gray. What happened next checked all the boxes for a fierce storm: heavy rain, thunder and flash flooding that sent people scurrying for dry land and crumbled mud-brick houses around Aswan, the largest city in southern Egypt. Then came the scorpions.

There were hundreds, if not thousands: yellowish four-inchers with as many as six pairs of eyes and a tail full of venom so toxic that the species is known, unscientifically, as the deathstalker.

Swept from their desert burrows by the rains, they came skittering into mountainside villages and burst into homes through cracks in the walls, stinging at least 503 people on Friday night alone, according to local officials.

“The floods in the villages of Aswan forced the scorpions out of their hide-outs, and they stung some people,” the administrator of a Facebook page dedicated to community news, Nubia, [lamented](#) after the waters had subsided. “O Allah, protect the land.”

In the final analysis, the storm that detonated over Aswan with biblical fury at about 9:30 p.m. on Friday inflicted its worst damage with flooding: Three people died, and local officials said 103 homes were partly or fully destroyed, though residents said the real toll was far greater.

On Monday, thousands of people were still doubling up with neighbors or sleeping outside as they tried to salvage whatever they could from the rubble. In a show of discontent rare for Egypt, where most dissent is suppressed by security forces, roughly a dozen protesters demonstrated in front of the Aswan governor’s office on Monday over the lack of electricity, water or any government assistance.

But it was the plague of scorpions that turned heads far from Aswan, a few hours south of the ancient temples of Luxor, where the Nileside pace of life is nonchalant, the small pastel-painted villages ramshackle and the weather dry — until Friday night.

With its vast deserts, Egypt is normally heaven for scorpions, 24 species in all, which make their homes in desert burrows or under rocks and can survive for weeks on end with no food or water. They are such longtime inhabitants of the country that two ancient kings borrowed their names, and the ancient goddess Isis was said to have [escaped danger with the help of seven scorpions](#), who also took the form of a goddess, Serket, in Egyptian mythology.

Friday’s heavy rains proved a less hospitable environment than usual. Scorpion experts said the flooding in Aswan had probably driven them from the mountainous desert that surrounds the area and into the villages.

Deathstalker scorpions — or, as they are known to scientists, *Leiurus quinquestriatus* — are part of daily life for Aswanis, especially in the summer, when scorpions tend to be more active. They scamper the streets, lurk under stones and trespass homes, nestling in shoes and beneath blankets.

Dozens of scorpion stings are reported in the area each year. If stung, everyone knows, a trip to the hospital for a shot of antivenom and a few days’ recovery will take care of it.

“We’re just used to it,” said Islam Mohamed, who pilots one of the many small boats that drift down the Nile around Aswan, ferrying people from place to place. “We just hit them with something when we see them.”

Still, 503 bites in one night is unheard-of. Hospitals around Aswan were forced to dig into their antivenom stashes, and a Health Ministry graphic circulating on Facebook over the weekend warned of the most common symptoms of scorpion stings: severe pain at the sting site, high fever, sweating, vomiting and diarrhea.

A deathstalker’s sting can kill a child. Adults may also sicken and die, depending on their health and weight, said Mohamed Abdel-Rahman, a molecular toxicology professor at Suez Canal University who studies scorpion venom.

News reports initially said three people had been fatally stung, but residents said the deceased were three soldiers at a police camp who had been electrocuted in the flooding from fallen wires.

Aswanis said that the rains had been the heaviest in seven years, but that flooding had rarely, if ever, touched residential areas before. The storm's intensity led some Egyptian meteorologists and scientists to speculate publicly that it was connected to climate change, which has hurt Egypt's [olive and date harvests](#), turned vast swaths of [farmland into desert](#) and made the country's already blazing summers even hotter.

Mourad Abazid, 56, a government employee from the low-lying village of Kobaniya, on the Nile's west bank, said the floods had inundated his house, forcing him and his family to shelter at a mosque. He was now sleeping in the street beside the rubble of their home, while his wife and three children stayed with neighbors.

"Thank God, no one died; we rescued people, but our houses are gone," he said. "We don't know what we're going to do now."

Most houses in the village were at least partly damaged, he said, with some in danger of collapsing. There had been no electricity or water since Friday night.

"It was just an hour of rain, but it wrecked everything," Mr. Mohamed said.

Aswan and the broader region of Upper Egypt have a long history of suffering official neglect. Amid widespread poverty, some Aswanis have turned to freelancing as scorpion hunters, a profitable if risky pursuit.

Scorpions can be milked for their venom, used for [scientific research and some medical treatments](#). A single gram of scorpion venom, requiring the milking of as many as 3,000 scorpions, can be exported for \$8,000, said Dr. Abdel-Rahman, who studies medical and scientific uses for the venom.

Toxins isolated from deathstalker venom are currently used in laboratory research and in cancer treatment, where they can be used to paint tumor cells in the brain during surgery, highlighting them for removal.

"I'm very, very sad when people kill scorpions," Dr. Abdel-Rahman said, "because the venom of scorpions is very rich and useful."

He and his research team regularly capture scorpions in the deserts around Aswan, Luxor, the Sinai Desert and Egypt's Mediterranean coast, then stimulate the scorpions with an electrical current to extract the venom. Once milked, the scorpions are released.

In 20 years of scorpion research, he said he had never been stung, a record he credited partly to diligent use of forceps — never his hands — to pick them up by their tails.

"Professionals can catch the scorpions from the tail by hand," he said. "But I don't recommend doing that."

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HEADLINE	11/15 Pentagon: debris-generating event in space
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/15/pentagon-tracking-debris-generating-event-space/
GIST	<p>The Pentagon is tracking a recent "debris-generating event" in outer space, military officials said, sparking fear of a major missile test in orbit.</p> <p>U.S. Space Command offered few details on the event, but defense officials have previously warned that Russian anti-satellite weapons testing could create large debris fields and spark chaos in space.</p> <p>"U.S. Space Command is aware of a debris-generating event in outer space. We are actively working to characterize the debris field and will continue to ensure all space-faring nations have the information necessary to maneuver satellites if impacted," Space Command said in a statement. "We are also in the</p>

process of working with [other agencies], including the State Department and NASA, concerning these reports and will provide an update in the near future.”

Citing unnamed U.S. officials, CNN correspondent Jim Sciutto said in a Twitter post Monday morning that the U.S. is “very concerned” about a Russian weapons test conducted over the past several days. If such a test did indeed take place, the details are unclear. But top Pentagon officials have previously warned Moscow against such actions in space.

Last December, for example, Space Command said that Russia tested a direct-ascent anti-satellite (DA-ASAT) missile.

That test was conducted in low Earth orbit. But officials seemed to suggest that an actual test in space was likely in the near future.

The DA-ASAT system is “capable of destroying satellites in low Earth orbit, which they have tested multiple times,” Space Command said of Russian tests in its December 2020 statement. “If this weapon is tested on an actual satellite or used operationally, it will cause a large debris field that could endanger commercial satellites and irrevocably pollute the space domain.”

Russia’s TASS news agency, citing the country’s Roscosmos space agency, reported earlier Monday that the International Space Station had maneuvered away from space debris while in orbit and the crew, which includes both Russian and American astronauts, were safely in “the green zone.”

Roscosmos officials said they had been warned of the potential debris danger from NASA’s Mission Control Center in Houston. It was not known if the two incidents are related.

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HEADLINE	11/15 China secretly acquired Italy drone maker
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-bought-italian-military-drone-maker-without-authorities-knowledge-11636972513?mod=hp_featst_pos3
GIST	<p>In 2018, a Chinese state-controlled company bought an Italian manufacturer of military drones. Soon after, it began transferring the company’s know-how and technology—which had been used by the Italian military in Afghanistan—to China.</p> <p>The Italian and European authorities had no knowledge of the move, revealing how Beijing is skirting weak investment-screening in Europe to acquire sensitive technology.</p> <p>Italian authorities are investigating the 2018 takeover of Alpi Aviation Srl by a Hong Kong-registered company that they say is a front for the Chinese state and was in the process of transferring the company’s technical and intellectual property to a new production site in China.</p> <p>The takeover fits a pattern, analysts say, of Chinese state firms using ostensibly private shell companies as fronts to snap up firms with specific technologies that they then shift to new facilities in China.</p> <p>“It’s a textbook case,” said Jaap van Etten, chief executive of Dutch economic-intelligence company Datenna, which tracks Chinese investments in Europe. “This is the strategy of the Chinese state, pushed by the Chinese government.”</p> <p>Europe is strengthening controls over investments following a wave of Chinese acquisitions. In 2018, the European Union established a new framework for screening. But ultimate responsibility lies with national governments, which must balance their desire for investment against security concerns and are unable to monitor deals at every company.</p>

“We need to make sure that they are not ending up in the hands of those who seek to undermine the international order or Western democratic values,” said Valdis Dombrovskis, executive vice president of the European Commission, the EU’s executive body.

The U.S. has strengthened the authority of its interagency panel that reviews investments, expanding its powers to look at deals that haven’t been submitted for review and sharpening its focus on China. In Europe, companies themselves are generally obliged to report relevant foreign takeovers for official review, for example when they involve security. Self-reporting allows some deals to go unnoticed.

“It’s a loophole,” said Francesca Ghiretti, an analyst at the Mercator Institute for China Studies, a think tank in Berlin. “More proactive screening would require more people and funding.”

Italian authorities say they stumbled on Alpi’s China links during a separate investigation. The company, based in the northern Italian town of Pordenone, manufactures light aircraft and mini drones called Strix. The drones, which were used by the Italian Air Force in Afghanistan, can be carried in a backpack, be deployed quickly by a single operator, and provide surveillance even at night, according to the company’s website.

Alpi had appeared on the radar of the Guardia di Finanza, the Italian financial police, twice since 2009 amid suspicions it had sold aircraft parts and drones to Iran in violation of an embargo. Authorities were also investigating its alleged illegal use of an airfield. Alpi denied any wrongdoing, saying it hadn’t sold any technology to Iran that could be put to military use.

Police say two searches of Alpi’s offices this year revealed the China connection. In July 2018, they say, a company named Mars (HK) Information Technology Co. Ltd., which had registered in Hong Kong two months earlier, bought a 75% stake in Alpi for 4 million euros, equivalent to \$4.6 million, and then invested another €1.5 million in it. Police say that was a significant overpayment.

They traced Mars’s ownership of Alpi through a web of intermediaries to two companies controlled by the Chinese state: China Railway Rolling Stock Corp., or CRRC, a state-controlled rail giant, and an investment group controlled by the municipal government of Wuxi, a city near Shanghai. That led the police to conclude that Mars was a shell company created to bring Alpi under the control of the Chinese government.

“This was clearly mainly a predatory investment in technology... and this type of investment in this sector is forbidden by Italian law,” said Guardia di Finanza Col. Stefano Commentucci, who ran the investigation.

In a statement, Alpi denied it had violated laws on transferring strategic information and technology out of the country. The company said the sale of the stake in the company was transparent and at its real value. It declined to comment further.

CRRC didn’t respond to requests for comment. Mars and Wuxi couldn’t be reached for comment.

The new owners weren’t deeply concealed. Datenna also traced the ownership using public sources. International law firm Dentons posted on its website in 2019 about its role advising on the deal, naming CRRC and Wuxi as the owners. The Dentons lawyer named as involved in the deal declined to comment.

Police say they found evidence that Alpi was negotiating with the prospective buyers before the sale was completed over the transfer of Alpi’s know-how and technology to China. The transfer of military technology and production outside the country requires permission from the Italian government.

Plans to move production to a high-tech hub near Wuxi accelerated after the installation of new management, composed of three Chinese executives and three Italians, police say. Italian authorities are investigating whether Alpi already transferred the technology and started production in China.

Police say Alpi in 2019 sent a military drone to China for more than a year, falsely describing it as a “radio-controlled airplane model” intended for an import fair in Shanghai that lasted five days.

Prosecutors allege that the six executives violated Italian laws on the export of military equipment. The Italian government has also opened an inquiry into whether it should have been notified of the sale. It has the right to veto takeovers by non-EU buyers of companies deemed strategic in sectors such as defense and communications.

Analysts say Beijing is using such purchases to target specific needs, such as semiconductors, to reduce its reliance on foreign technologies.

Earlier this year, the Italian government used its veto powers to halt the sale of a 70% stake in a Milan-based producer of semiconductor equipment, LPE SpA, to a Chinese company.

Why Alpi was acquired remains unclear. China is a leading producer of reconnaissance and armed drones and is the world’s largest drone exporter. The U.S., a leader in military drones, has demurred from foreign sales citing proliferation concerns.

China was likely less interested in the drone aircraft itself than a specific element, such as its night-vision sensor or its data-link technology, said Douglas Barrie, senior fellow for military aerospace at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

If CRRC were interested in becoming a player in drones, the software for the Italian vehicle could provide a backbone that could be scaled up, he said.

“We know how technology-acquisitive China is,” said Mr. Barrie. “They are out there vacuuming up companies.”

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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	11/15 Stabbing suspect arrested after shoplifting
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/suspect-in-seattle-stabbing-arrested-after-returning-to-shoplift-police-say/
GIST	<p>Officers arrested a 26-year-old man suspected of stabbing an employee of a downtown business after the man returned to the same shop two hours later to shoplift again, according to the Seattle Police Department.</p> <p>Officers responded to reports of a robbery and stabbing in the 1400 block of Second Avenue around 12:38 p.m. on Monday, according to the department’s online blotter.</p> <p>A security guard told police he tried several times to stop the shoplifting suspect from leaving, but he was punched in the face. The suspect then allegedly stabbed another employee in the back before fleeing, police said.</p> <p>Officers were not able to find the suspect in the area, according to the online post. Medics treated the stabbing victim, who was later able to drive himself to a hospital, according to police.</p> <p>The suspect returned around 1:55 p.m. to shoplift in the same downtown business, according to police. Officers responded and found the suspect in the 400 block of Pine Street, police said.</p> <p>Police booked the suspect into the King County jail for investigation of assault and robbery.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Turkey: arrest; suspect Haiti assassination
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/16/turkey-arrests-suspect-in-assassination-of-haitian-president-jovenel-moise
GIST	<p>Turkish authorities have arrested a man considered a suspect of “great interest” in the assassination in July of the Haitian president, Jovenel Moïse, Haiti’s foreign minister, Claude Joseph, has said.</p> <p>The suspect, Samir Handal, a businessman, was detained at Istanbul airport early on Monday, where he arrived in transit from the US to Jordan, Anadolu Agency reported. His arrest was announced by authorities in Haiti later on Monday.</p> <p>Moïse, a 53-year-old former businessman who took office in 2017, was shot dead at his private residence and his wife was wounded in the attack. A group of Colombian mercenaries emerged as the main suspects though nobody has been charged or convicted in connection with the case.</p> <p>“I just had a phone conversation with the Turkish minister, my friend Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, to thank Turkey for the arrest of Samir Handal, one of the persons of great interest in the investigation into the assassination of the president,” Joseph said on Twitter. He gave no further details, including whether Haiti would seek the man’s extradition.</p> <p>Anadolu Agency said Handal was wanted on an Interpol notice and later questioned by court officials, who issued the 40-day temporary custody order at the request of Turkey’s justice ministry. He is being held in Istanbul’s Maltepe prison, the agency reported.</p> <p>More than 40 suspects have been arrested so far in relation to Moïse’s murder, including 18 former Colombian soldiers and several Haitian police officers. Colombian authorities have said the majority of its former soldiers did not know the true nature of the operation they were hired to participate in.</p> <p>In October, another Colombian man was arrested in Jamaica.</p> <p>Moïse was shot dead and his wife was wounded in a pre-dawn attack at his private home.</p> <p>The killing deepened political instability in the country. After the killing, Haiti was struck by a magnitude 7.2 earthquake in August that killed more than 2,200 people, a rise in gang-related violence and a severe shortage of fuel.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 China official seeks Interpol executive role
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/15/chinese-official-seeks-interpol-role-sparking-fears-for-dissidents
GIST	<p>A senior official at China’s ministry of public security is seeking election to Interpol’s executive committee, prompting concerns from human rights activists and international politicians that China could misuse the global criminal police organisation’s capabilities to track down overseas dissidents.</p> <p>Hu Binchen, the deputy director-general of the ministry’s international cooperation department, is one of three candidates vying for two seats as Asia delegates on the committee.</p> <p>The 13-member executive committee oversees the work of Interpol’s general secretariat and helps set future policy. Interpol controls a number of databases containing identifying details of people and property, which assist in global policing. It also operates the system of red notices, which are requests “to locate and provisionally arrest an individual pending extradition”.</p> <p>However, there are long-running concerns over governments or authorities misusing the system to track down dissidents. While there are clear rules against the use of red notices on refugees, high-profile cases have shown countries are repeatedly able to obtain red notices, against Interpol policy.</p>

Activists and advocacy groups, as well as 50 members of an international cross-party group of legislators, the Inter-parliamentary Alliance on [China](#), have lodged their objections at Hu's potential election to the committee, noting alleged attempts by China to use the red notice system to target exiled Uyghur activists.

"By electing Hu Binchen to the executive committee, the general assembly would be giving a green light to the PRC [People's Republic of China] government to continue their misuse of Interpol and would place the tens of thousands of Hong Konger, Uyghur, Tibetan, Taiwanese and Chinese dissidents living abroad at even graver risk," [said the letter](#) from the Alliance, citing [the July detention of Uyghur activist Idris Hassan](#) in Morocco.

"Allowing Interpol to be used as a vehicle for the PRC government's repressive policies does great harm to its international standing."

The human rights group Safeguard Defenders said the Chinese ministry's international cooperation department, in which Hu is a senior official, oversaw operations named Sky Net and Fox Hunt, chasing down fugitives overseas.

It alleged "teams were sent by the ministry "to intimidate and harass ethnic Chinese to force them to return to China 'voluntarily'".

In a report also released on Monday, Safeguard Defenders said there had been a tenfold increase in the issuance of Chinese red notices between 2000 and 2020.

The former chairman of Interpol Meng Hongwei was also a ministry of public security official, serving as vice-minister. However, Meng's Interpol term ended prematurely in 2018 when he disappeared during a visit to China and was later [jailed for 13 years on bribery charges](#), amid Xi Jinping's anti-graft campaign targeting millions of officials.

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HEADLINE	11/15 San Francisco stores closure: retail theft
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/15/walgreens-closures-san-francisco-crime-debate
GIST	<p>In mid-October Walgreens announced the impending closure of five of its San Francisco stores. "Retail theft" had risen to unsustainable levels despite increased investment in security, the chain said. It was time to give up.</p> <p>In the months before the announcement, viral videos of brazen shoplifting attempts at Walgreens locations in the city – including one that appeared to show a man riding his bike out of a store with a trash bag filled with stolen items – had put it at the center of a heated national debate over fears of a pandemic-induced "crime wave".</p> <p>To critics of San Francisco's leaders, the closures seemed to confirm a narrative long held by people outside of the city and increasingly by those within: that San Francisco is a lawless place where officials turn a blind eye to crime, to local businesses' detriment. Political leaders, including Mayor London Breed, pointed at Walgreens. "When a place is not generating revenue and when they're saturated – Walgreens has a lot of Walgreens locations all over the city – I do think there are other factors that come into play," Breed told reporters.</p> <p>But neighborhood representatives and advocates for people caught in the legal system paint a more complex picture of Walgreens' role in San Francisco and the city's struggles with shoplifting in recent years.</p> <p>They described Walgreens stores as essential places where San Franciscans can get staple foods at a reasonable price and pick up medication and other last-minute essentials. "We have seniors, working families and longtime customers and I think it's going to be extremely disruptive, especially for older people who are more pattern-based," Ahsha Safai said of the closures.</p>

Safai represents the Excelsior District, just outside of the historically Latino Mission District, on San Francisco's board of supervisors. The neighborhood's Walgreens, which closed on 11 November, sat on a bustling stretch of Mission Street, surrounded by clothing stores, banks, and locally owned eateries. On a Tuesday afternoon in the weeks before it was closing, the store was lively with seniors picking up essentials and residents waiting to be called up to the pharmacy counter.

Many shoppers hop off the nearby bus lines to get to the Walgreens, making it a convenient stop in a high-traffic area where parking can be abysmal, Safai said. The foot traffic from nearby shops feeds the Walgreens and vice versa, making the drugstore an important piece of the neighborhood's retail ecosystem.

Safai said he had been working with police and community organizations to address retail crime in his neighborhood. "For the most egregious, there has to be consequences. People have to know they can't walk into the store with a garbage bag," he said.

"But we're not gonna incarcerate our way out of this problem," he cautioned. "We have to redirect people to the right path."

'Walgreens was essential'

Gina Mullens' father has been working for Walgreens for more than 40 years, first in the Mission District and then in the East Bay. She recalls going to company picnics growing up and would opt to shop at a Walgreens over CVS because of her family's long history with the company. "Walgreens is a big, big part of my life. It sounds corny but it fed my family."

Mullens now lives in the East Bay, where she sees her local Walgreens showing telltale signs of theft concerns. More and more items are locked behind plexiglass, she said, and some shelves are consistently empty. While she's frustrated by the wait required to get a store employee to unlock the products, she doesn't judge those who shoplift from the store out of necessity. "I understand tough times don't judge anybody. Do what you gotta do to feed your family."

Before moving across the Bay Bridge, Mullens worked in public housing near the Walgreens location on Cesar Chavez Street in the Mission District. She got flu shots for her four children there and would pick up kitchen staples for lower prices than at her local chain grocery store. The location is scheduled to close on 17 November.

"That Walgreens was essential, at least for my family," Mullens said of the Mission District location. "It's closer than Safeway, has more items than the corner store, and they have a pharmacy attached. It's been a staple so to see them shutting down in neighborhoods that really need them is heartbreaking."

Mullens works for San Francisco's Pretrial Diversion Project, a non-profit that looks to divert people from shoplifting. The program helps participants stay on top of court appearances and orders and connects them to employment, addiction, and other services that can prevent them from catching a new charge. Mullens supervises staffers and works with the groups that provide services to the non-profit's clients.

The organization's CEO, David Mauroff, said there was no denying that people were stealing from drug stores, clothes shops, and out of cars. Mauroff, like many San Franciscans, has a Walgreens connection. "I don't know how many times we've run in to get cold medicine 'cause our kid couldn't sleep," he said of the chain's Excelsior location.

Mauroff has seen people shoplift at his local store. But he worries that high-profile incidents obscure the decrease in property crime the city reported in 2020. And while he hasn't seen any increase in clients coming to the organization, he has noticed that hotspots for theft in San Francisco have changed over the course of the pandemic.

“There are less tourists and people driving to work – that’s where the break-ins were in the past. But because of Covid, people had to find another target, and unfortunately it became Walgreens and other retail stores.”

‘We can’t be driven by hysteria’

Crime data is complex and often incomplete, and a comprehensive picture of what happened in the city during the pandemic is still emerging. San Francisco has long recorded higher levels of property crime than other California cities, but recent data suggests that, while some categories of crime have increased, others have fallen.

Larceny, the category that shoplifting falls under, appears to have decreased from 2019 to 2020, bringing the overall property crime down with it, according to the San Francisco police department’s [crime dashboard](#). Offenses including rape and robbery also decreased in 2020, a San Francisco Chronicle [analysis](#) of recent FBI data indicated. Homicides, motor vehicle thefts, and burglaries all increased, according to that same FBI data.

The decrease in shoplifting appears to be continuing in 2021. In 2020 there were 12,266 reported incidents and about 380 arrests for the offense, according to [data](#) from the San Francisco district attorney’s office. As of the end of October 2021, about 200 people have been arrested for larceny or theft this year and there have been 9,221 reports. By the end of September last year, there were already 9,558 reports.

Regardless of any disconnects between perception, data and lived experience, people breaking into cars near tourist hubs like Fisherman’s Wharf and viral videos like the one documenting a man riding his bike out of a Walgreens forced officials to respond.

In late September 2021, the mayor, along with the San Francisco police chief, unveiled the [organized retail theft investigation and deterrence strategy](#). The initiative will expand the city’s retail crime unit from two to five officers. The new hires will coordinate with other law enforcement bodies including the California highway patrol and off-duty officers hired as private security by businesses through the city’s 10B [program](#). The city will also triple the number of unarmed community ambassadors, from eight to 25.

Mauroff, the pre-trial program’s CEO, said that while police had a role to play in deterring and addressing shoplifting, he advocated for solutions that were not solely led by police but rather took the rehabilitative needs of individuals and racial disparities in the criminal justice system into account.

He noted that during pandemic lockdowns, therapeutic services like anger management classes that had previously proven helpful were only available remotely, making them largely inaccessible for most of the diversion program’s clientele, especially those who are housing insecure.

“We have to not be driven by hysteria so we can find solutions,” Mauroff said.

Charles Ryan, a case manager at the Pretrial Diversion Project, argued that large corporations like Walgreens, too, had a role to play.

Ryan lives in a San Francisco community that has already gone through a Walgreens closure blamed on “rampant” theft. In the summer of 2019, Walgreens [closed](#) its store in Bayview Hunters Point, a historically Black, working-class neighborhood that sits along the San Francisco Bay.

Ryan said he had seen people shoplift at the store but lamented he hadn’t witnessed any effort from management to make the drugstore a respected piece of the community – for instance, training their employees on implicit bias and keeping the location clean. Black customers would, however, be followed around the store by employees who assumed they had come to steal, he said.

“You didn’t have a manager pushing the line on how they treat people coming in,” Ryan said. “No one was there to do the pressure wash and keep it clean, so people said, ‘We just go in there and take whatever we want. They don’t treat us right and never did anything for the neighborhood.’”

	<p>“Closing the other locations is bad because they’re closing some in neighborhoods where people would have to go across town to get what they need,” he continued. “You’re just closing it because a few people were stealing.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Colorado shooting: 6 teens hospitalized
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/reports-multiple-people-shot-high-school-aurora-colorado/story?id=81186739
GIST	<p>Six high schoolers are in the hospital after they were shot at a park near their Aurora, Colorado, school, police said.</p> <p>All injuries are non-life-threatening, Aurora police chief Vanessa Wilson said at a news conference. School resource officers put a tourniquet on one victim who is in surgery, she said.</p> <p>The students, who all attend Aurora Central High School, are ages 14 to 18, Aurora police said.</p> <p>There are believed to be "multiple" suspects who are all at large in the wake of the shooting, which took place just north of Aurora Central High School, at Nome Park.</p> <p>The shooting appeared to be a drive-by, Wilson said, adding that people may have also fled on foot.</p> <p>The parents of all victims have been notified, Wilson said.</p> <p>Wilson urged residents in the area to send authorities their home surveillance footage to help police with the investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Closing arguments: Rittenhouse trial
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/jury-begin-deciding-kyle-rittenhouses-fate-closing-arguments/story?id=81176848
GIST	<p>A Wisconsin jury will begin deliberating the fate of Kyle Rittenhouse on Tuesday after hearing starkly different theories of the same evidence, with a prosecutor portraying the teenager as a trouble-seeking active shooter to counter defense claims he shot three men, two fatally, in self-defense.</p> <p>The Kenosha County Circuit Court jury was sent home for the night after hearing hours of closing arguments in the high-profile homicide trial and getting more than 30 pages of instructions from Judge Bruce Schroeder.</p> <p>Schroeder told the jury they will begin their deliberations Tuesday after 12 of the 18 panelists who heard evidence in the case are randomly selected to decide Rittenhouse's fate.</p> <p>Rittenhouse was 17 and armed with an AR-15-style semiautomatic rifle that had a 30-round ammunition clip at the time he shot and killed Joseph Rosenbaum, 36, and Anthony Huber, 26, and severely wounded Gaige Grosskreutz, 27, during an Aug. 25, 2020, protest in Kenosha.</p> <p>During the trial, which began Nov. 2, Rittenhouse testified that he shot all three men in self-defense as they and others allegedly attacked him during the demonstration over the police shooting of Jacob Blake, a 29-year-old Black man who was left paralyzed.</p> <p>Rittenhouse, now 18, has pleaded not guilty to charges of first-degree reckless homicide, first-degree intentional homicide, attempted first-degree intentional homicide and two counts of first-degree recklessly endangering safety.</p> <p>The prosecution's closing argument</p>

Immediately following the jury instructions, prosecutor Thomas Binger began giving his summation by telling the jury, "This is a case in which a 17-year-old teenager killed two unarmed men and severely wounded a third person with an AR-15 that did not belong to him."

"This isn't a situation where he was protecting his home or his family," Binger said. "He killed people after traveling here from Antioch, Illinois, and staying out after a citywide curfew."

Binger launched into detail about the first killing on the night of Aug. 25, 2020, in Kenosha, showing the jury video the prosecutor claims shows that Rittenhouse provoked the deadly encounter with Rosenbaum.

Binger said Rittenhouse sat down a fire extinguisher he had in his left hand and pointed his gun at Rosenbaum and others. In a dramatic reenactment, Binger sat down a water bottle as if it were the fire extinguisher with his left hand and raised the semiautomatic rifle used in the shootings at the courtroom gallery.

"That is what provokes this entire incident. And one of the things to keep in mind is that when the defendant provokes the incident, he loses the right to self-defense," Binger said. "You cannot claim self-defense against a danger you create. That's critical right here. If you're the one who is threatening others, you lose the right to claim self-defense."

The prosecutor asked the jury to watch the video of the Rosenbaum shooting closely, pointing out that Rosenbaum held up his hands as he ran after Rittenhouse and cited the teenager's testimony that he knew the man was unarmed.

"Mr. Rosenbaum is not even within arm's reach when the first shot occurs," Binger said, playing the video of the shooting several times.

Binger described the confrontation between Rosenbaum and Rittenhouse as being akin to a "bar fight," even showing the jurors an image of Patrick Swayze in the movie "Roadhouse," in which the actor played a bar bouncer who protects a small town from a corrupt businessman.

"This is a fight that maybe many of you have been involved in," Binger said, referring to the confrontation between Rittenhouse and Rosenbaum. "Two people, hand to hand. We're throwing punches, we're pushing, we're shoving, we're whatever. But what you don't do is you don't bring a gun to a fistfight."

Binger said that after shooting Rosenbaum, Rittenhouse ran away without attempting to provide first aid. The prosecutor said others in the crowd had every reason to chase after Rittenhouse to stop him.

"At that point, the crowd is dealing with what they perceive to be an active shooter, someone who has just shot someone who is still in possession of the gun, who is fleeing the scene, and how are we supposed to know where he's going next?" Binger said.

He said those chasing Rittenhouse took the "least intrusive means possible" to stop the gunman.

Binger showed video of Rittenhouse running down a street and Huber hitting him twice with a skateboard, the second time after which he said Rittenhouse lost his balance on his own and fell to the ground.

The prosecutor said Rittenhouse without regard for others standing nearby fired twice at an unarmed unidentified man who reportedly kicked him in the face before he fatally shot Huber point-blank in the chest.

Binger said Grosskreutz, who was armed with a pistol, was shot in the right bicep when he tried to disarm Rittenhouse. "Gauge Grosskreutz had his own gun in his own hand. He could have aimed and fired at the defendant, but he did not," Binger said.

He said that despite lying to people throughout the night that he was a trained EMT, Rittenhouse never attempted to help the people he shot.

"This is someone who has no remorse, no regard for life, only cares about himself," the prosecutor said of Rittenhouse.

Binger wrapped up his argument by telling the jury to put themselves in Rittenhouse's shoes and asking if a "reasonable person" would react in the same way.

"I submit to you that no reasonable person would have done what the defendant did. And that makes your decision easy," Binger said. "He's guilty of all counts."

Defense presents argument

Rittenhouse's attorney, Mark Richards, started his closing argument by accusing the prosecution of lying and misrepresenting evidence in a case that he described as a "rush to judgment." He said Rittenhouse was arrested and hit with homicide charges within 48 hours of the shooting while investigators were still interviewing witnesses and collecting evidence.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this case is not a game. It is my client's life," Richards said. "We don't play fast and loose with the facts, pretending that Mr. Rosenbaum was citizen A, No. 1 guy. He was a bad man. He was there. He was causing trouble. He was a rioter. And my client had to deal with him that night alone."

Richards slammed Binger for coming up with the theory of Rittenhouse provoking the initial shooting by allegedly pointing his gun at Rosenbaum and others, saying the prosecutor came up with that "when his case exploded in his face."

He cited video showing Rittenhouse running away from Rosenbaum after he claimed Rosenbaum ambushed him, threw a bag at him and continued to charge after him when the teenager aimed his gun at him. Richards cited the evidence of prosecution witnesses who testified that Rosenbaum, who he said was off his medication for mental illness, had threatened to kill Rittenhouse and others if he ever got them alone, statements Binger said are not found on video and contended never happened.

"Ladies and gentlemen, when my client shot Joseph Rosenbaum, he feared for his life," Richards said. "He feared because of the prior threats, the prior statements and the violent acts that had been witnessed by my client."

Richards added, "Kyle shot Joseph Rosenbaum to stop a threat to his person. And I'm glad he shot him, because if Joseph Rosenbaum had gotten that gun, I don't for a minute believe he wouldn't have used it against somebody else. He was irrational and crazy."

Richards scoffed at Binger's description of Rittenhouse as an "active shooter."

"Kyle was not an active shooter. That is a buzzword that the state wants to latch onto because it excuses the actions of that mob on the 25th of (August) 2020," Richards said.

He said that after shooting Rosenbaum, Rittenhouse was doing the reasonable thing by running to tell the police what had happened only to be kicked in the face by one man and attacked with a skateboard by Huber.

Richards said Grosskreutz was shot because he was coming after Rittenhouse with a handgun and was "going to shoot my client."

"Unfortunately, my client shot him first. If he (Grosskreutz) had retreated, it's over," Richards said.

Richards told the jury that Rittenhouse was under no obligation to testify, yet he did because he wanted the "jurors to hear his personal experience on the night" of the shootings.

"He knew Mr. Binger would cross-examine him for hours, and he was willing to get up on that witness stand, take the oath and tell his story the best way he could," Richards said. "And he did."

Richards described the case against Rittenhouse as a "political case."

"We can take politics out of it as in Democrat and Republican, but the district attorney's office is marching forward with this case because they need somebody to be responsible, they need somebody to put (forth) and say we did it, he's the person who brought terror to Kenosha," Richards said. "Kyle Rittenhouse is not that individual."

Prosecution's rebuttal argument

Prosecutor James Kraus began his rebuttal argument to the defense by countering Richards' statement that Rosenbaum was a serious threat to Rittenhouse.

"It cannot be reasonable for someone to be holding an AR-15 semiautomatic rifle with powerful ammunition and be chased by someone who is unarmed, who is smaller than him, who is shorter than him, and the first thing that you do to defend yourself is you plug four rounds into him," Kraus told the jury.

He said the first of four shots immobilized Rosenbaum by shattering his hip and that the wounded man crumpled to the pavement.

"No one is saying that Mr. Rosenbaum should have chased Mr. Rittenhouse. No one is saying that Mr. Rittenhouse did not have a right to defend himself," Kraus said. "This case is about the right to use deadly force."

He said there was no evidence presented that the unarmed Rosenbaum was capable of killing Rittenhouse with his bare hands.

"Mr. Rittenhouse has size on him. We heard about how he's a swimmer, we heard that he's a lifeguard, he's apparently in some kind of shape. Punch him (Rosenbaum) in the face, kick him in the testicles, knee him in the face, hit him with your gun," Kraus said.

"You don't just immediately get to shoot someone. It is not reasonable for any adult, for any person, for any 17-year-old male to not try and defend yourself first using other methods," he continued. "Why do you have to keep tracking him and shooting him and ending up with a kill shot in the back?"

Prior to closing arguments, Schroeder instructed the jury that they will be allowed to consider lesser charges against Rittenhouse if the panel decides the prosecution failed to meet its burden to prove the original charges.

The judge also granted a defense motion on Monday to dismiss a charge of possession of a dangerous weapon by a person under 18 after the prosecution agreed that the rifle Rittenhouse used in the shooting did not meet the required standard of a short-barreled rifle under the law.

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